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Wolfe

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(54) **DISPOSABLE AIR/WATER AND SUCTION VALVES FOR AN ENDOSCOPE**

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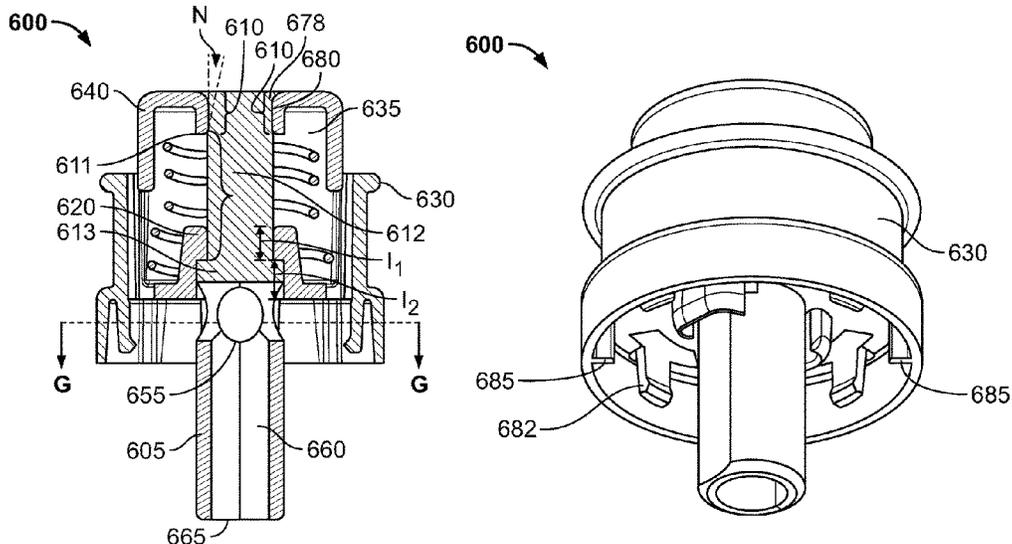
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A disposable air/water valve for an endoscope, including a shaft having a passage from an opening to a vent. The shaft has grooves and ridges and a protrusion formed at the vent. Seals are set within some of the grooves. An inner ring, having a diaphragm, extends from an outer circumference of the inner ring to an internal circumference of an outer cap. Hinges extend vertically downward from the diaphragm and ribs are formed along the internal circumference of the outer cap. A button cap has an internal ring that securely attaches to the shaft. A resilient member is securely disposed between the button cap and the diaphragm. The outer cap, inner ring, and internal ring of the button cap define a central bore to accommodate the shaft therein.

12 Claims, 25 Drawing Sheets



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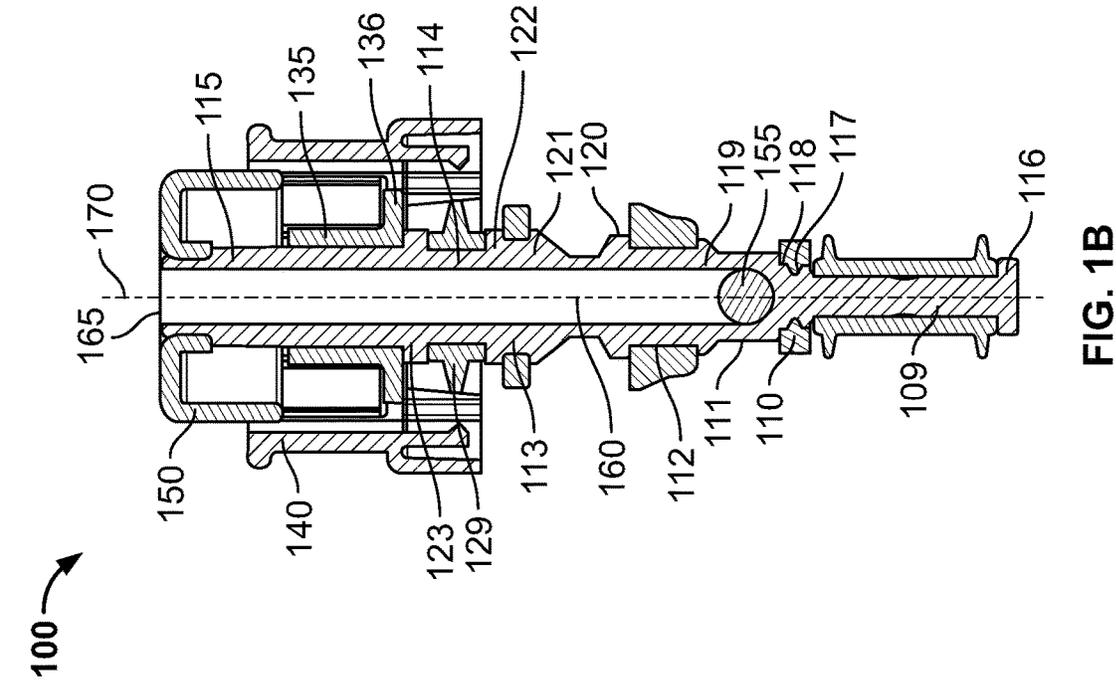


FIG. 1A

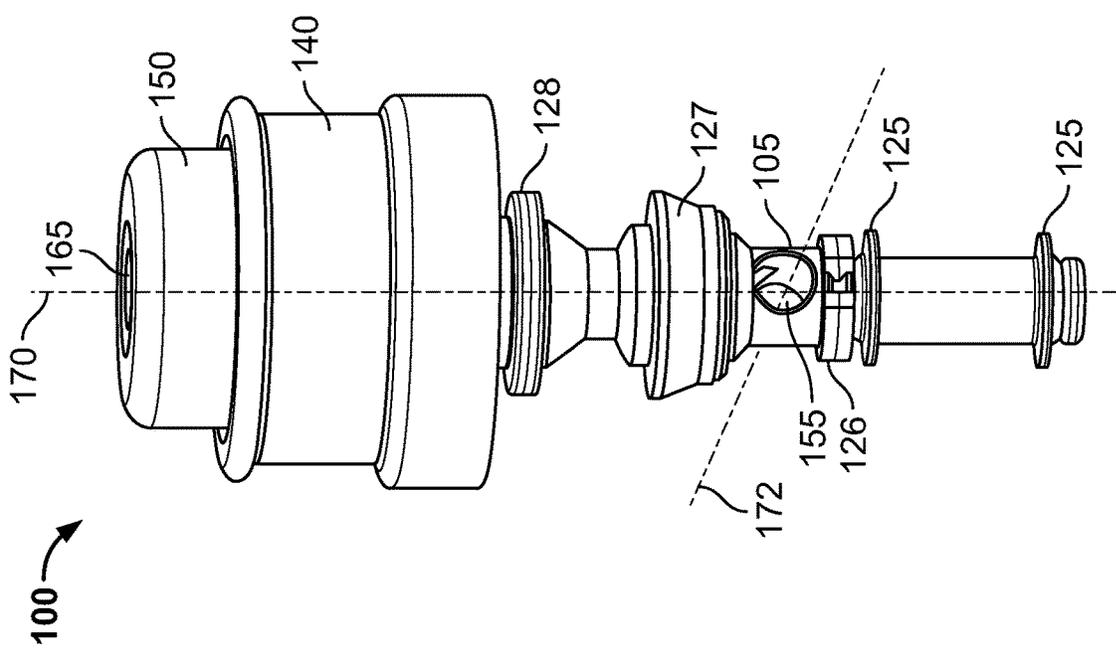


FIG. 1B

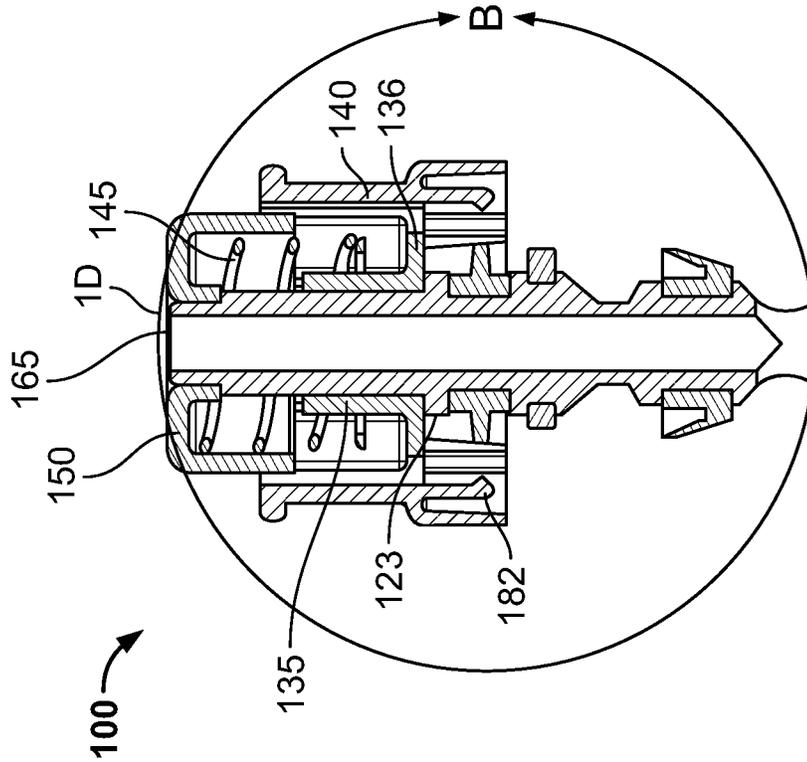


FIG. 1C

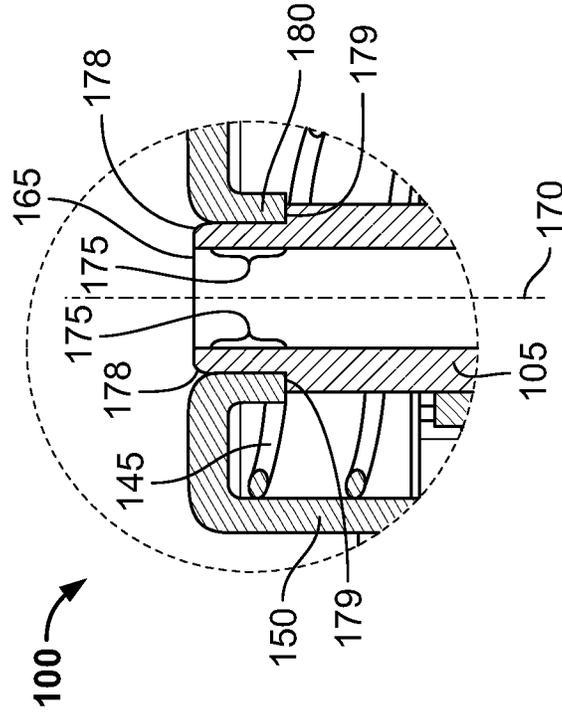


FIG. 1D

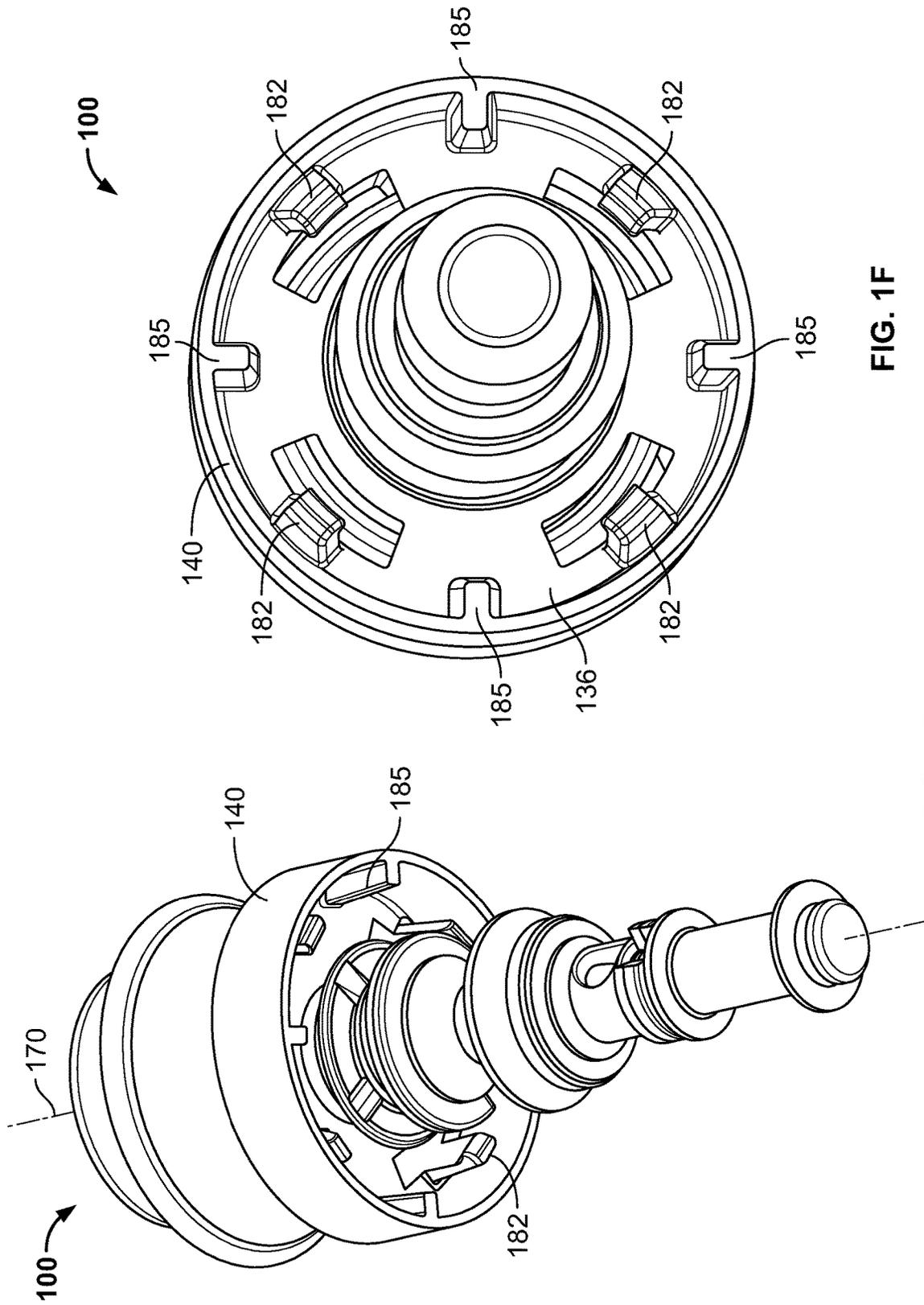


FIG. 1F

FIG. 1E

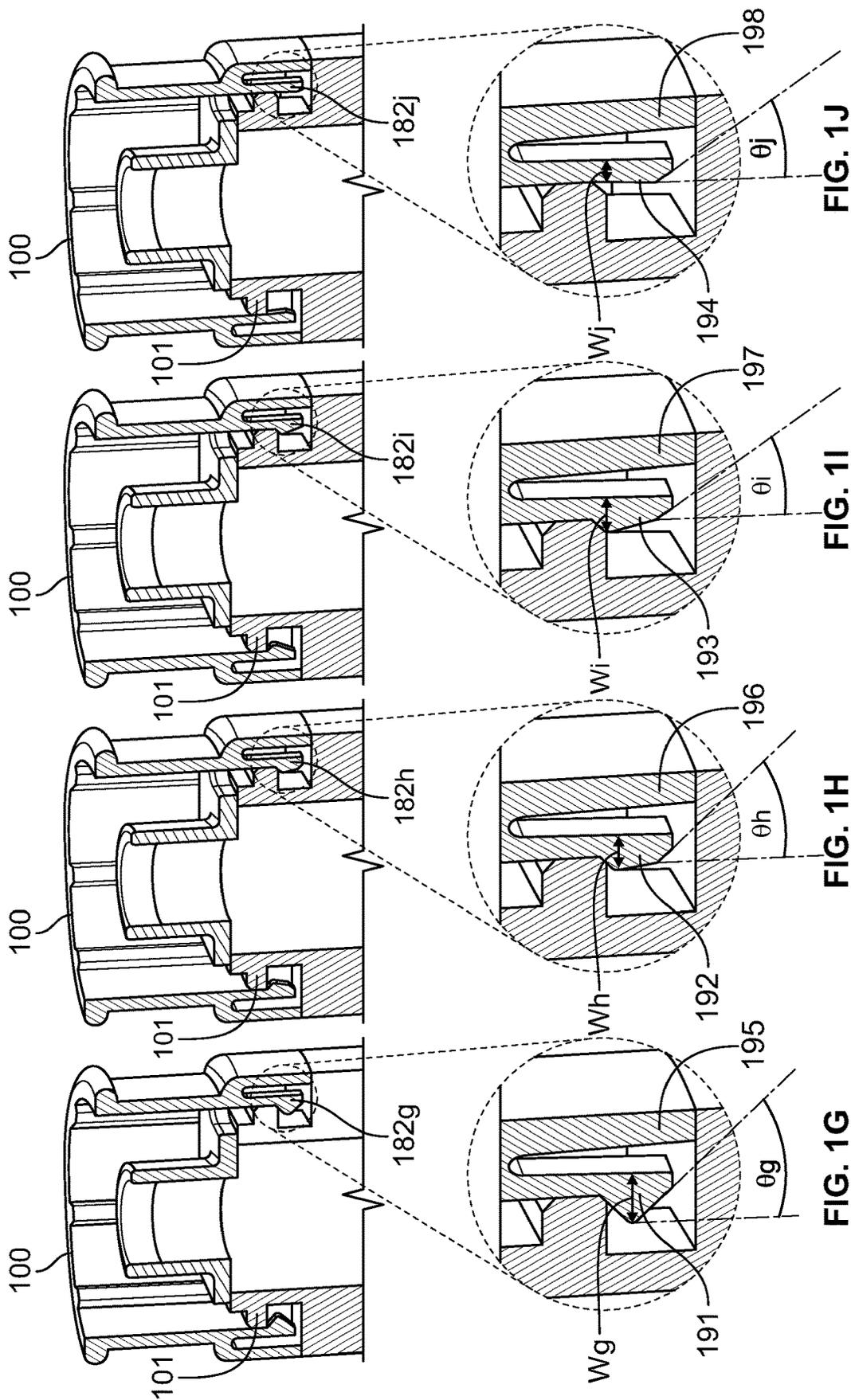


FIG. 1J

FIG. 1I

FIG. 1H

FIG. 1G

205

Air/Water Valve Insertion Force

140 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
Sample	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	Type
1	12.2	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 STD
2	9.1	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 STD
3	10.8	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 STD
4	8.4	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 STD
5	10.1	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 STD
Average	10.1					
Max	12.2					
Min	8.4					

140 1/2 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
6	8.9	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 1/2 STD
7	8.1	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 1/2 STD
8	9.6	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 1/2 STD
9	8.7	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 1/2 STD
10	9.6	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 1/2 STD
Average	9.0					
Max	9.6					
Min	8.1					

140 WAVE	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
11	10.5	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 WAVE
12	10.7	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 WAVE
13	10.9	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 WAVE
14	11.9	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 WAVE
15	10.4	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	140 WAVE
Average	10.9					
Max	11.9					
Min	10.4					

FIG. 2A

210

70 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
Sample	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	Type
16	9.6	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 STD
17	9.6	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 STD
18	7.4	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 STD
19	9.4	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 STD
20	9.7	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 STD
Average	9.1					
Max	9.7					
Min	7.4					

70 1/2 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
21	9.1	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
22	7.9	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
23	13.0	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
24	10.5	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
25	9.7	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
Average	10.0					
Max	13.0					
Min	7.9					

70 WAVE	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
26	13.0	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 WAVE
27	8.2	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 WAVE
28	10.5	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 WAVE
29	11.7	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 WAVE
30	12.3	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	70 WAVE
Average	11.1					
Max	13.0					
Min	8.2					

FIG. 2B

215

35 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
Sample	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	Type
31	9.9	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 STD
32	9.3	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 STD
33	9.1	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 STD
34	8.2	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 STD
35	7.4	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 STD
Average	8.8					
Max	9.9					
Min	7.4					

35 1/2 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
36	6.4	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
37	9.5	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
38	6.8	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
39	8.8	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
40	7.1	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
Average	7.7					
Max	9.5					
Min	6.4					

35 WAVE	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
41	12.0	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 WAVE
42	10.6	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 WAVE
43	8.9	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 WAVE
44	9.3	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 WAVE
45	7.0	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 21.6N	Pass	35 WAVE
Average	9.6					
Max	12.0					
Min	7.0					

FIG. 2C

220

Air/Water Valve Removal Force

140 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
Sample	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	Type
1	5.81	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	140 STD
2	14.23	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 STD
3	8.91	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 STD
4	8.54	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 STD
5	7.10	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	140 STD
Average	8.9					
Max	14.2					
Min	5.8					

140 1/2 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
6	11.35	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 1/2 STD
7	6.36	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	140 1/2 STD
8	9.04	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 1/2 STD
9	7.12	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	140 1/2 STD
10	9.82	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 1/2 STD
Average	8.7					
Max	11.4					
Min	6.4					

140 WAVE	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
11	6.10	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	140 WAVE
12	11.58	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 WAVE
13	12.19	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 WAVE
14	6.40	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	140 WAVE
15	10.98	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	140 WAVE
Average	9.5					
Max	12.2					
Min	6.1					

FIG. 2D

225

70 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
Sample	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	Type
16	6.79	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 STD
17	6.30	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 STD
18	5.57	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 STD
19	6.34	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 STD
20	5.49	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 STD
Average	6.1					
Max	6.8					
Min	5.5					

70 1/2 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
21	6.04	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
22	9.16	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Fail	70 1/2 STD
23	6.06	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
24	5.28	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
25	5.05	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 1/2 STD
Average	6.3					
Max	9.2					
Min	5.1					

70 WAVE	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
26	5.09	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 WAVE
27	8.07	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 WAVE
28	6.42	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 WAVE
29	4.06	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 WAVE
30	4.01	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	70 WAVE
Average	5.5					
Max	8.1					
Min	4.0					

FIG. 2E

230

35 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
Sample	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	Type
31	6.46	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 STD
32	6.57	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 STD
33	4.46	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 STD
34	5.97	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 STD
35	4.50	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 STD
Average	5.6					
Max	6.6					
Min	4.5					

35 1/2 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
36	5.58	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
37	5.44	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
38	5.38	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
39	6.28	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
40	5.48	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 1/2 STD
Average	5.6					
Max	6.3					
Min	5.4					

35 WAVE	Actual Force	Expected Force		Goal Force		
41	5.42	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 WAVE
42	5.03	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 WAVE
43	6.28	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 WAVE
44	5.66	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 WAVE
45	6.05	≤ 72N	Pass	≤ 8.1N	Pass	35 WAVE
Average	5.7					
Max	6.3					
Min	5.0					

FIG. 2F

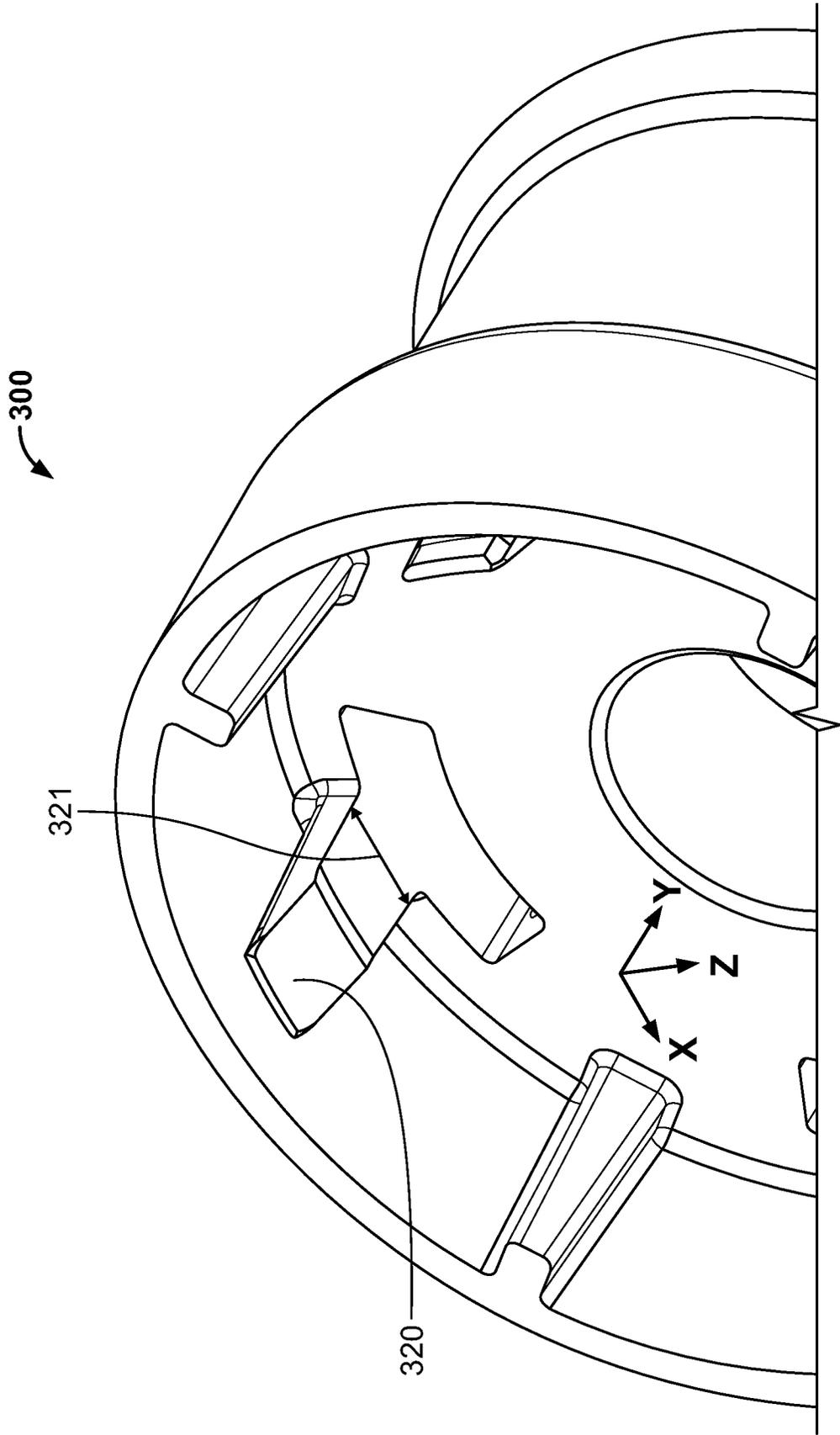


FIG. 3A

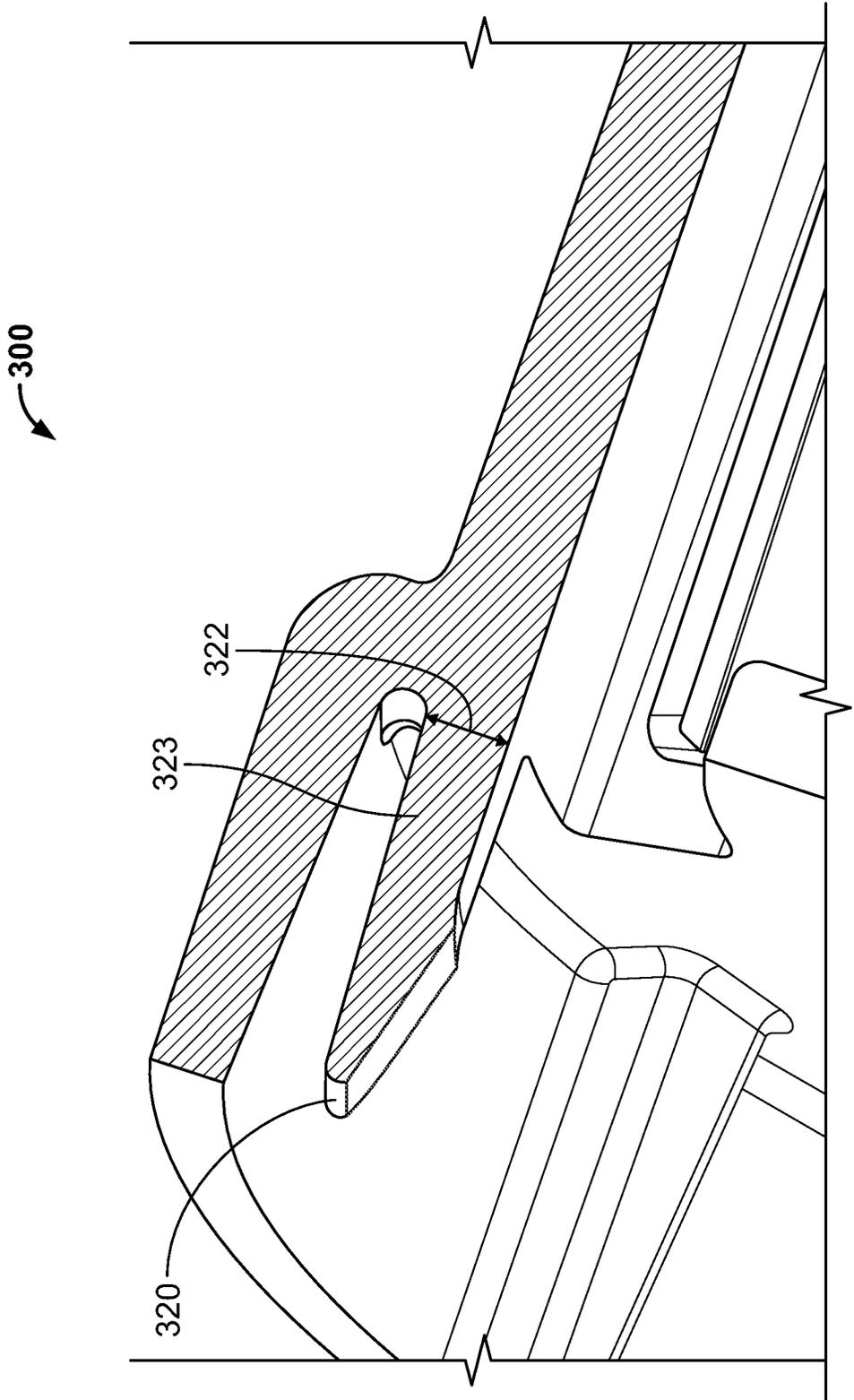


FIG. 3B

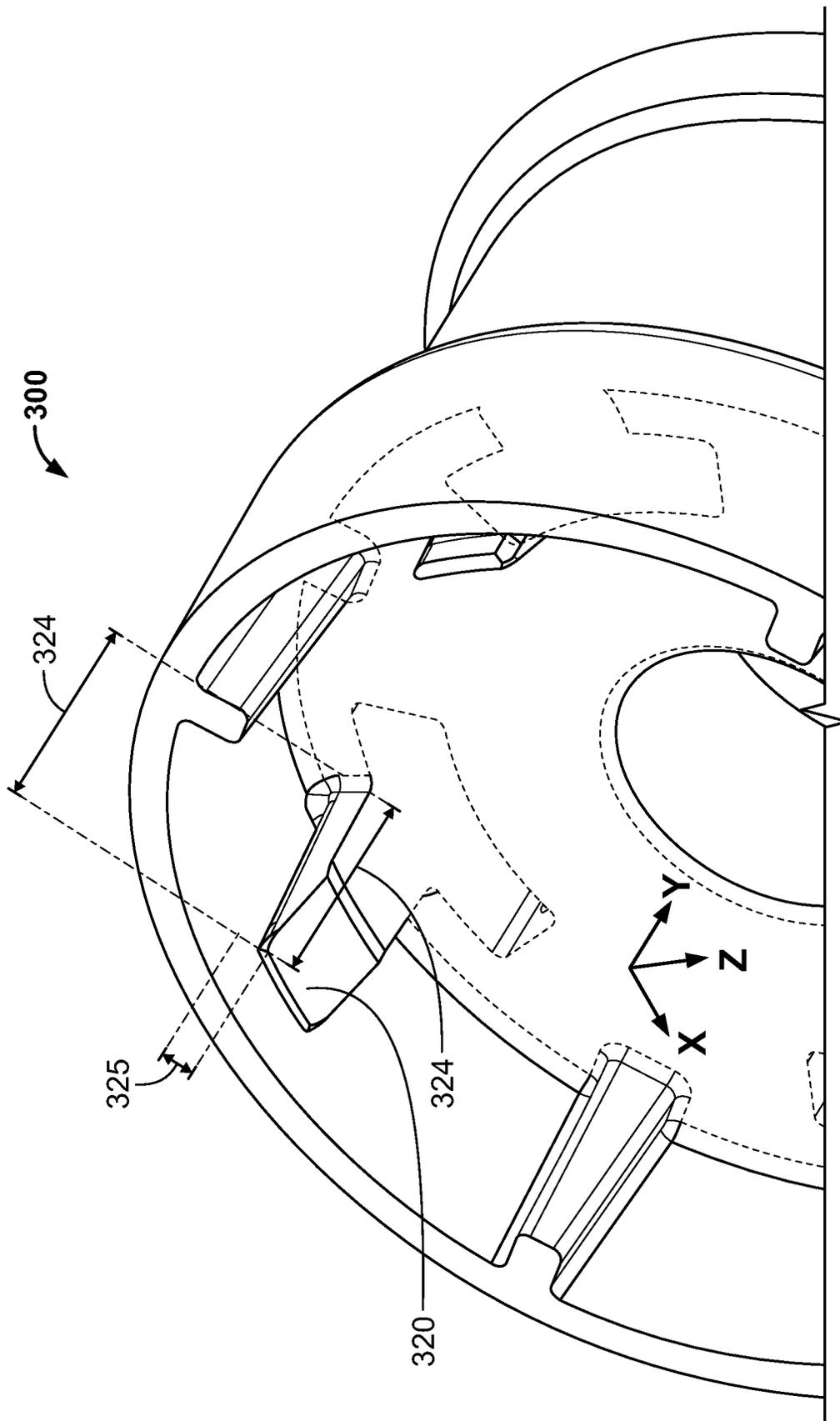


FIG. 3C

314 ↗

Air/Water Valve Depression Force						Depression Distance		
140 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force	Goal Force	Actual Distance	Expected Distance	Pass/Fail	Type	
Sample	N	N	N	mm	mm	Pass/Fail	Type	
1	20.95	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	140 STD	
2	16.31	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	-13.7	2 - 5	Fail	140 STD	
3	17.03	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	4.58	2 - 5	Fail	140 STD	
4	15.28	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	4.58	2 - 5	Fail	140 STD	
5	17.18	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	4.58	2 - 5	Fail	140 STD	
Average	17.35			Average	0.92			
Max	20.95			Max	4.58			
Min	15.28			Min	-13.70			

Air/Water Valve Depression Force						Depression Distance		
140 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force	Goal Force	Actual Distance	Expected Distance	Pass/Fail	Type	
Sample	N	N	N	mm	mm	Pass/Fail	Type	
6	11.61	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	140 1/2 STD	
7	10.41	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	140 1/2 STD	
8	9.28	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	4.58	2 - 5	Fail	140 1/2 STD	
9	10.10	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	140 1/2 STD	
10	9.15	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	4.58	2 - 5	Fail	140 1/2 STD	
Average	10.11			Average	4.58			
Max	11.61			Max	4.58			
Min	9.15			Min	4.58			

FIG. 3D

140 WAVE Sample	Actual Force		Expected Force		Goal Force		Pass/Fail		Actual Distance		Expected Distance		Pass/Fail		Type
	N	N	N	N	N	N	Pass/Fail	Pass/Fail	mm	mm	mm	mm	Pass/Fail	Pass/Fail	Type
11	13.71	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	9.6N - 14.4N	Pass	Pass	5.09	5.09	2 - 5	2 - 5	Pass	Pass	140 WAVE	
12	11.02	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	Pass	5.09	5.09	2 - 5	2 - 5	Pass	Pass	140 WAVE	
13	11.95	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	9.6N - 14.4N	Pass	Pass	5.09	5.09	2 - 5	2 - 5	Pass	Pass	140 WAVE	
14	12.04	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	Pass	5.09	5.09	2 - 5	2 - 5	Pass	Pass	140 WAVE	
15	13.56	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	9.6N - 14.4N	Pass	Pass	5.09	5.09	2 - 5	2 - 5	Pass	Pass	140 WAVE	
Average	12.46							Average	5.09	5.09	5.09	5.09			
Max	13.71							Max	5.09	5.09	5.09	5.09			
Min	11.02							Min	5.09	5.09	5.09	5.09			

FIG. 3D(Cont.)

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70 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force	Goal Force	Actual Distance	Expected Distance	Pass/Fail	Type
Sample	N	N	N	mm	mm	Pass/Fail	Type
16	13.55	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 STD
17	12.87	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 STD
18	18.94	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	4.58	2 - 5	Fail	70 STD
19	17.89	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	4.58	2 - 5	Fail	70 STD
20	13.21	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 STD
Average	15.29			Average	4.58		
Max	18.94			Max	4.58		
Min	12.87			Min	4.58		

70 1/2 STD	Actual Force	Expected Force	Goal Force	Actual Distance	Expected Distance	Pass/Fail	Type
Sample	N	N	N	mm	mm	Pass/Fail	Type
21	18.52	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	5.09	2 - 5	Fail	70 1/2 STD
22	15.74	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	5.09	2 - 5	Fail	70 1/2 STD
23	9.73	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	70 1/2 STD
24	13.67	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.6N	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	70 1/2 STD
25	13.44	6.4N - 42N	9.6N - 14.4N	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	70 1/2 STD
Average	14.22			Average	5.09		
Max	18.52			Max	5.09		
Min	9.73			Min	5.09		

FIG. 3E

70 WAVE Sample	Actual Force		Expected Force		Pass/Fail		Goal Force		Pass/Fail		Actual Distance		Expected Distance		Pass/Fail		Type
	N	N	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	N	Pass/Fail	mm	mm	mm	mm	Type				
26	10.44	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 WAVE								
27	9.78	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.4N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 WAVE								
28	9.75	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 WAVE								
29	10.24	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.4N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 WAVE								
30	9.40	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Fail	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	70 WAVE								
Average	9.92					Average	4.58										
Max	10.44					Max	4.58										
Min	9.40					Min	4.58										

FIG. 3E(Cont.)

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35 STD		Actual Force	Expected Force	Pass/Fail	Goal Force	Pass/Fail	Actual Distance	Expected Distance	Pass/Fail	Type
Sample	N	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	mm	mm	Pass/Fail	
31	11.94	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 STD
32	12.65	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 STD
33	12.50	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 STD
34	12.26	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 STD
35	12.44	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 STD
Average	12.36						Average	5.09		
Max	12.65						Max	5.09		
Min	11.94						Min	5.09		
35 1/2 STD		Actual Force	Expected Force	Pass/Fail	Goal Force	Pass/Fail	Actual Distance	Expected Distance	Pass/Fail	Type
Sample	N	N	N	Pass/Fail	N	Pass/Fail	mm	mm	Pass/Fail	
36	10.84	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 1/2 STD
37	11.02	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 1/2 STD
38	11.19	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	5.09	2 - 5	Pass	35 1/2 STD
39	14.78	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Fail	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	35 1/2 STD
40	12.55	6.4N - 42N	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	35 1/2 STD
Average	12.08						Average	4.89		
Max	14.78						Max	5.09		
Min	10.84						Min	4.58		

FIG. 3F

35 WAVE Sample	Actual Force	Expected Force	Pass/Fail	Goal Force	Pass/Fail	Actual Distance	Expected Distance	Pass/Fail	Type
	N	N	N	N	N	mm	mm		
41	10.68	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	35 WAVE
42	10.65	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	35 WAVE
43	11.73	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	35 WAVE
44	15.26	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Fail	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	35 WAVE
45	13.38	6.4N - 42N	Pass	9.6N - 14.6N	Pass	4.58	2 - 5	Pass	35 WAVE
Average	12.34					Average	4.58		
Max	15.26					Max	4.58		
Min	10.65					Min	4.58		

FIG. 3F(Cont.)

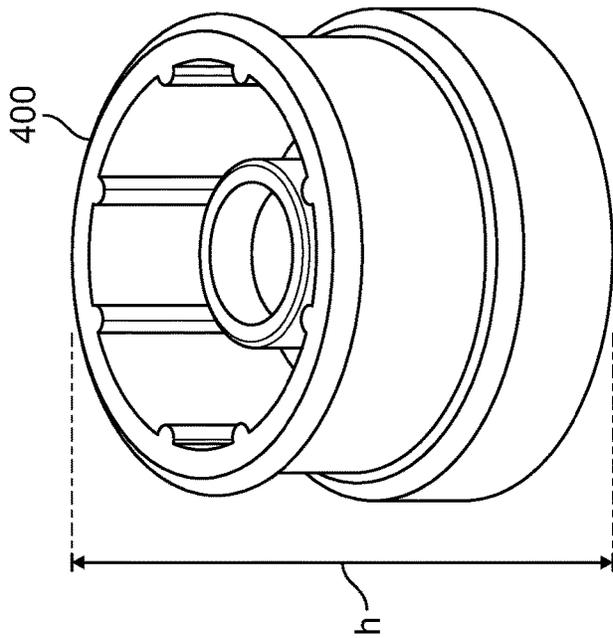


FIG. 4A

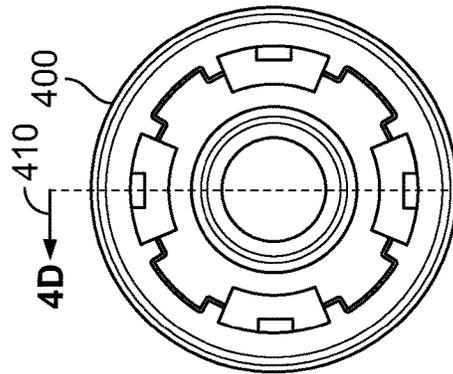


FIG. 4C

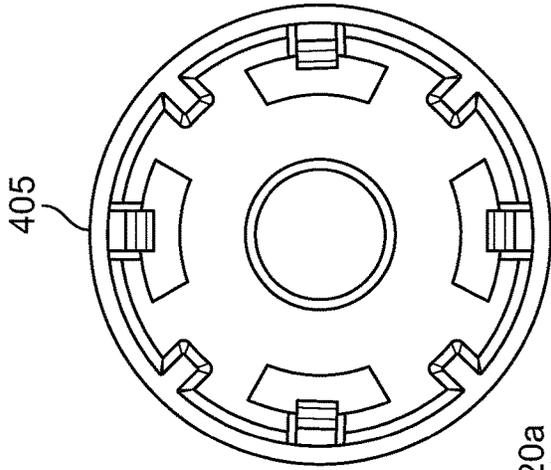


FIG. 4B

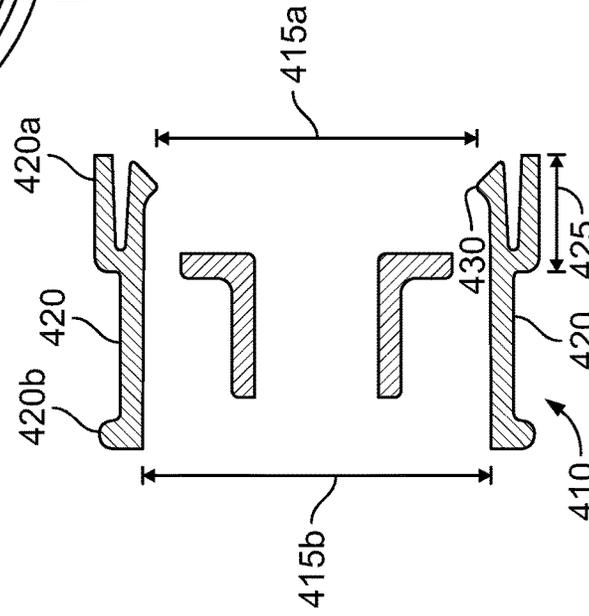


FIG. 4D

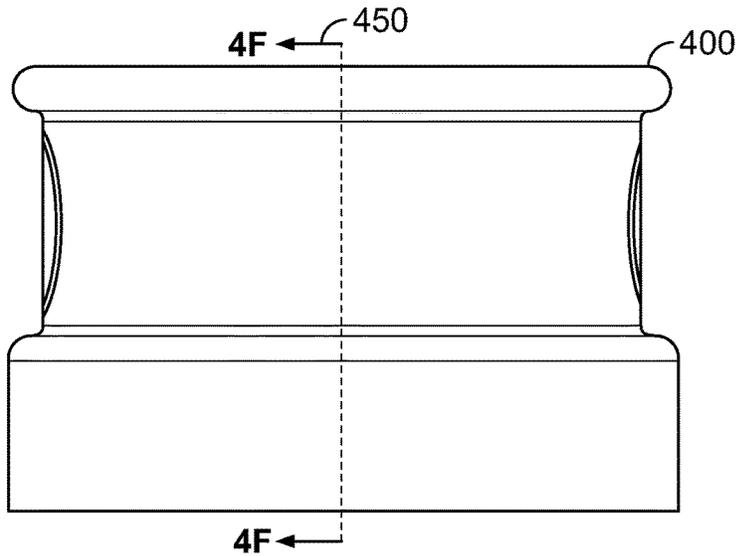


FIG. 4E

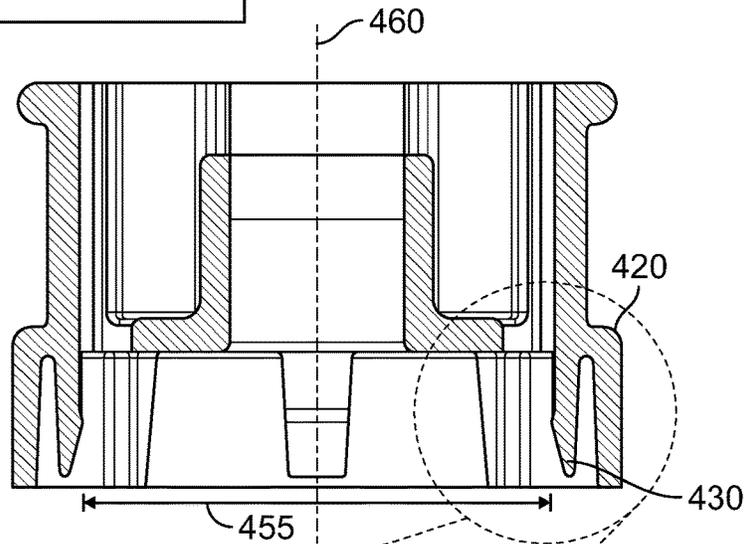


FIG. 4F

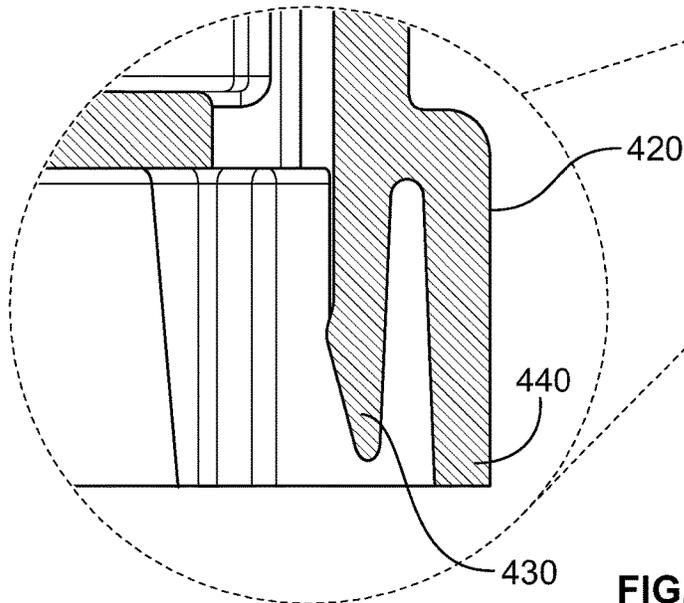


FIG. 4G

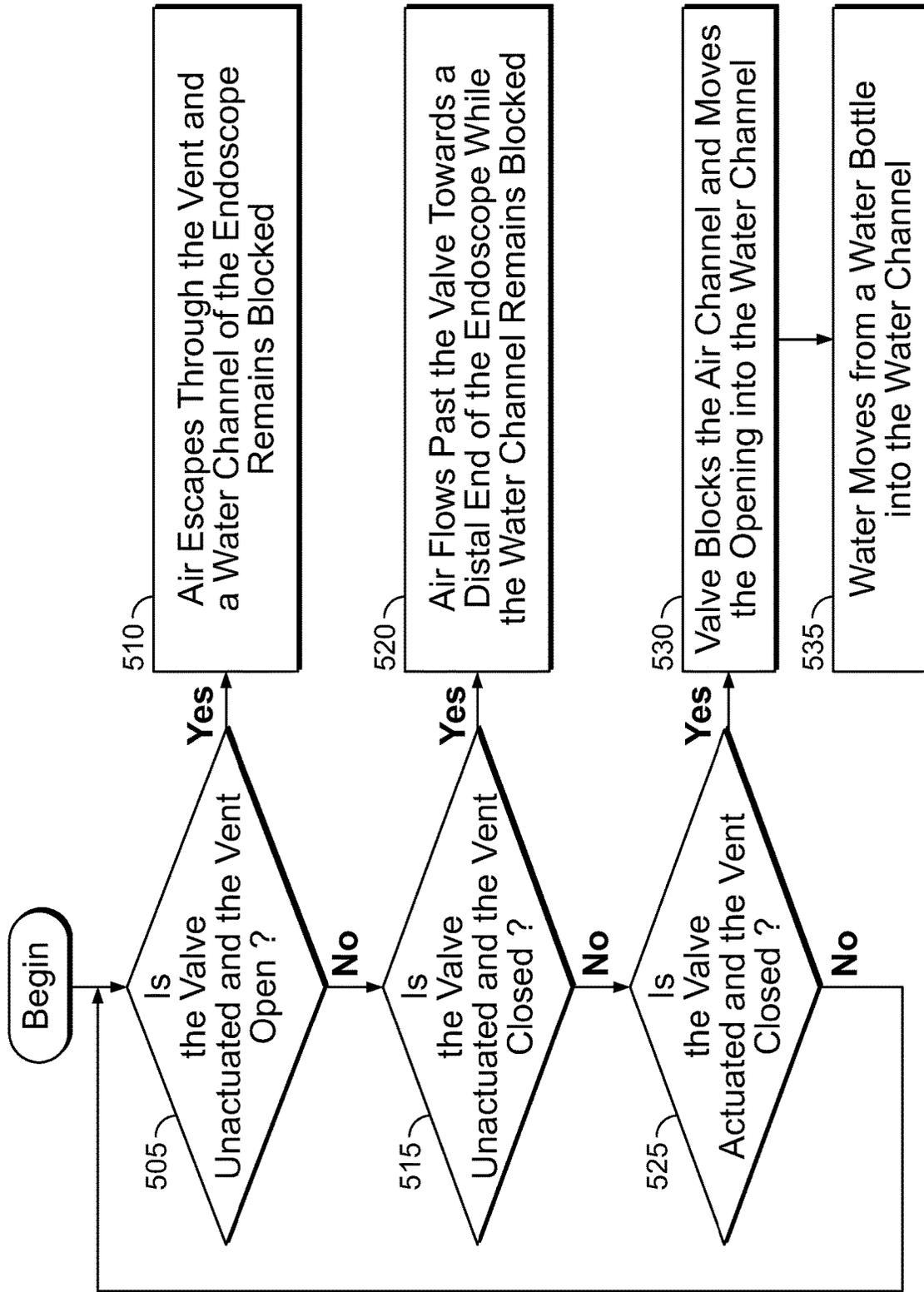


FIG. 5

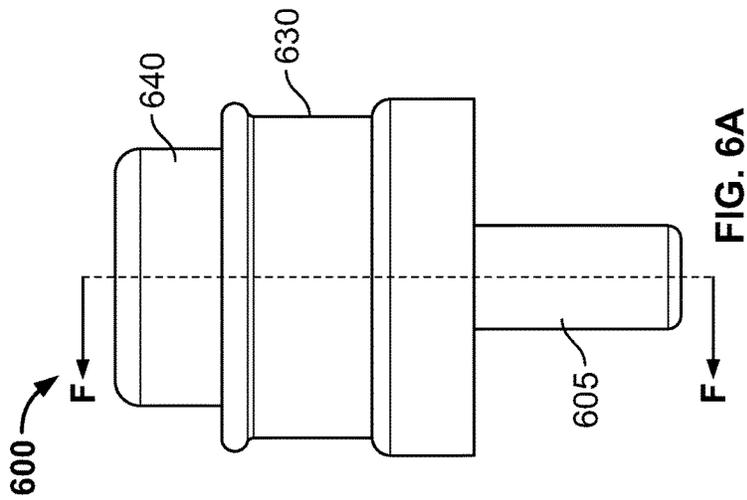


FIG. 6A

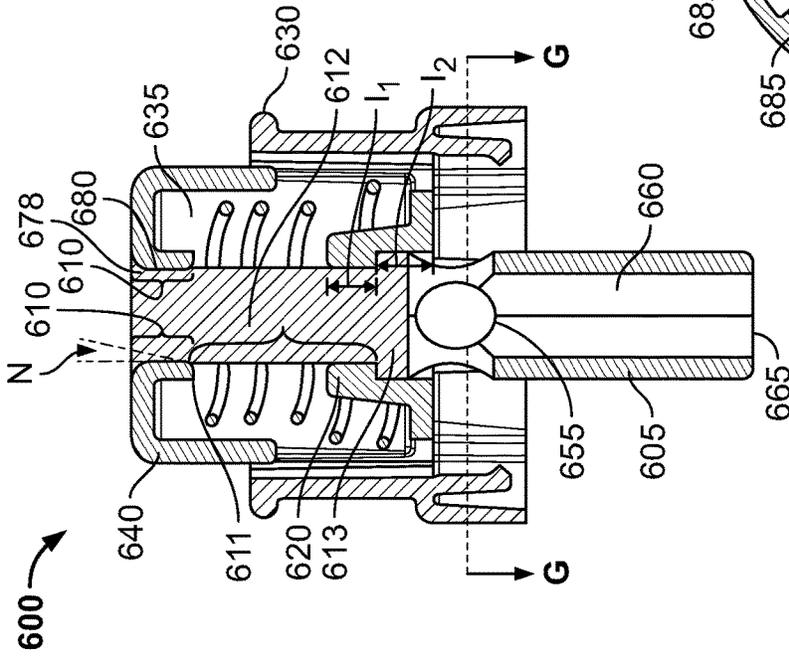


FIG. 6C

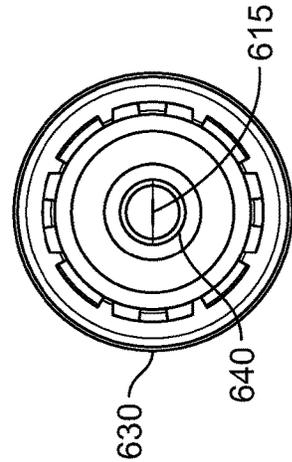


FIG. 6B

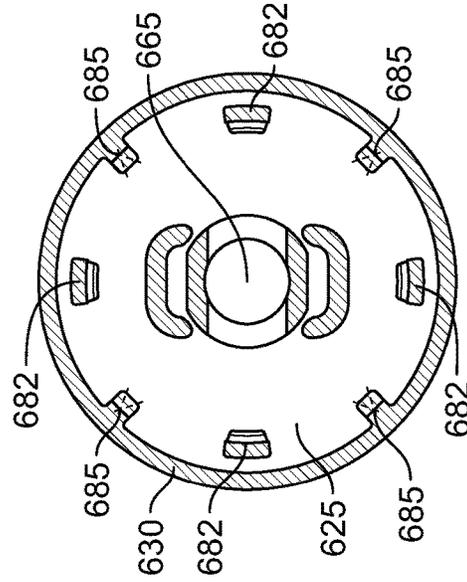


FIG. 6D

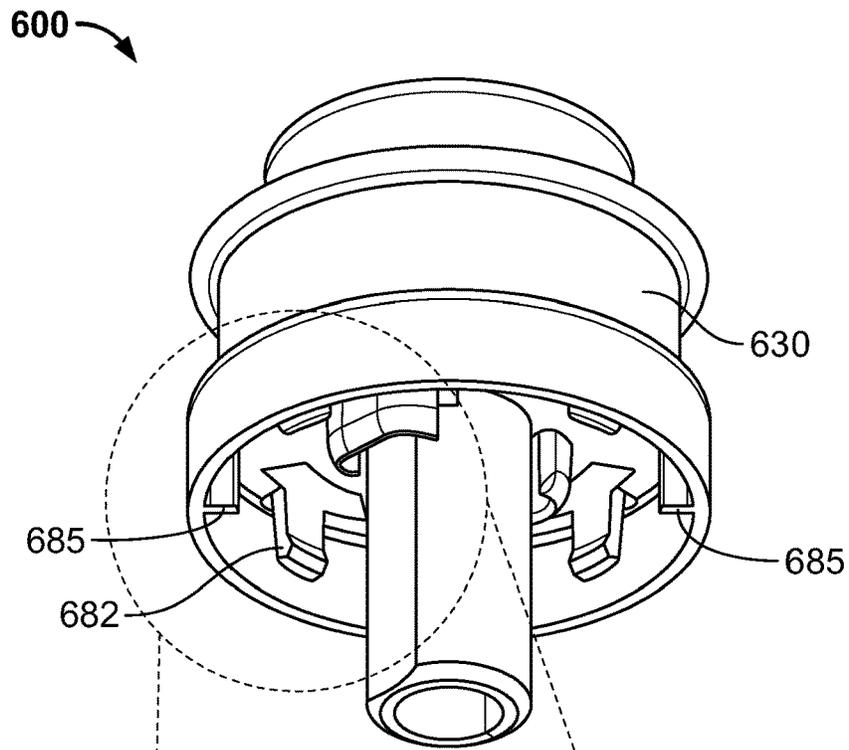


FIG. 6E

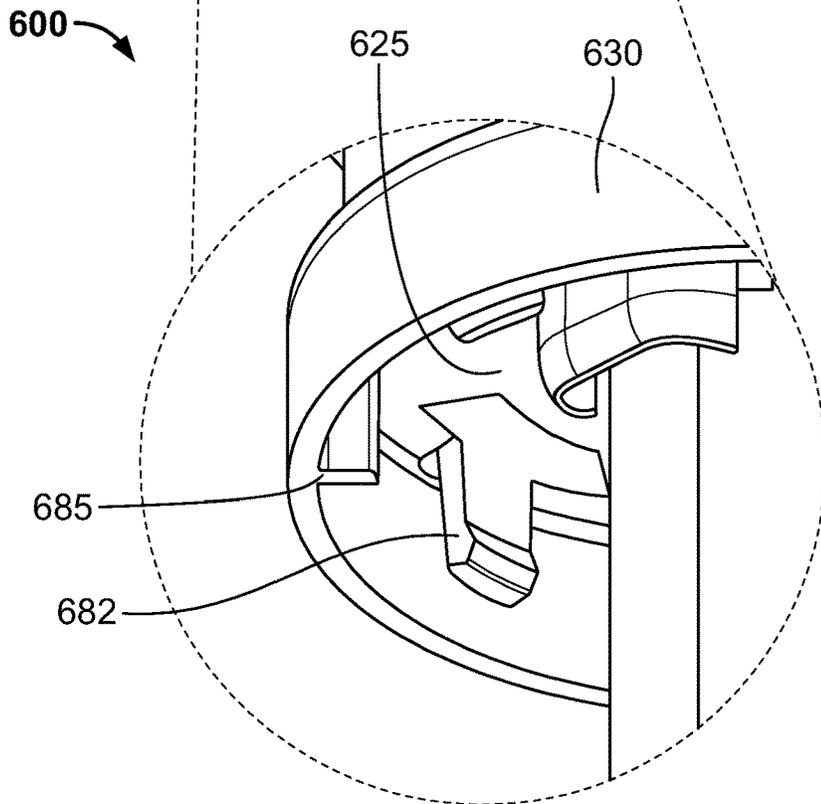


FIG. 6F

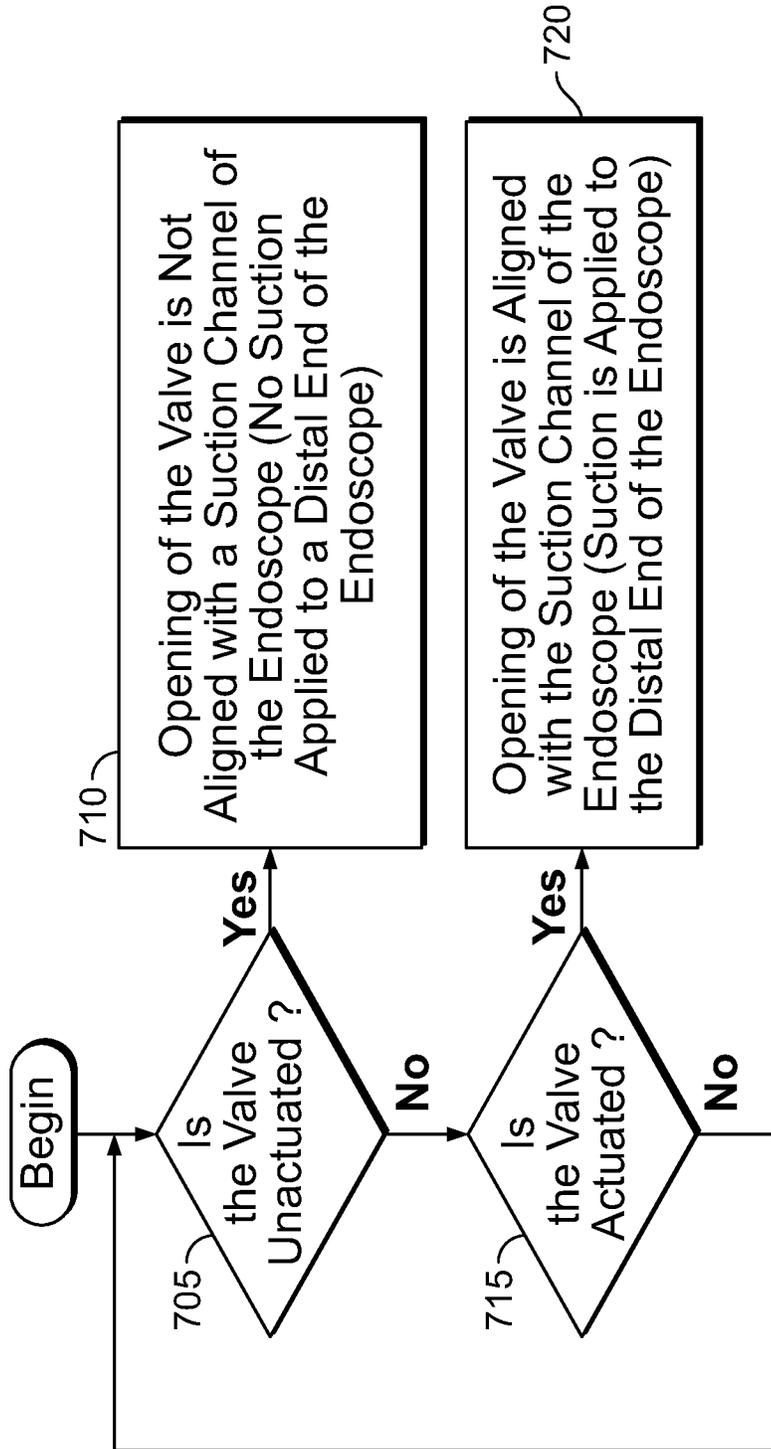


FIG. 7

DISPOSABLE AIR/WATER AND SUCTION VALVES FOR AN ENDOSCOPE

CROSS-REFERENCE

This application is a continuation of U.S. Nonprovisional patent application Ser. No. 15/355,390, filed on Nov. 18, 2016, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/259,573, filed on Nov. 24, 2015, and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/375,359, filed on Aug. 15, 2016. Each of the above-mentioned applications is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

The above-mentioned applications are herein incorporated by reference in their entirety.

FIELD

The present specification relates generally to endoscopy systems and more particularly, to disposable air/water and suction valves for use with an endoscope.

BACKGROUND

Endoscopes have attained great acceptance within the medical community since they provide a means for performing procedures with minimal patient trauma while enabling the physician to view the internal anatomy of the patient. Over the years, numerous endoscopes have been developed and categorized according to specific applications, such as cystoscopy, colonoscopy, laparoscopy, and upper GI endoscopy and others. Endoscopes may be inserted into the body's natural orifices or through an incision in the skin.

An endoscope usually includes an elongated tubular shaft, rigid or flexible, having a video camera or a fiber optic lens assembly at its distal end. The shaft is connected to a handle which sometimes includes an ocular element for direct viewing. Viewing may also be possible via an external screen. Various surgical tools may be inserted through a working channel in the endoscope for performing different surgical procedures. Often, the endoscope also has fluid injectors ("jet") for cleaning a body cavity, such as the colon, into which they are inserted. A control section of the endoscope may include a suction cylinder and an air/water cylinder. Valves may be inserted into these cylinders to control various functions of the endoscope.

For example, an air/water valve for an endoscope may be inserted into the air/water cylinder or channel of the endoscope to provide air and water to the endoscope. When the air/water valve is in a first, normal position, air escapes from a vent in the valve. When insufflation is desired, an operator places a finger over the vent, which redirects the air towards the distal end of the endoscope, thus insufflating the organ that is being examined. When the operator engages the air/water valve (e.g. by depressing the valve), air is redirected to a water bottle and creates pressure in the bottle that causes water to flow towards the distal end of the endoscope.

In addition, a suction valve for the endoscope may be inserted into the suction cylinder or channel of the endoscope to provide suction to the endoscope. When the suction valve is in a first, normal position, air flow from the distal tip of the endoscope is blocked by the valve. When suction is desired, an operator engages the suction valve (e.g. by depressing the valve) to open the suction channel to create negative pressure that draws air or fluid into the opening of the instrument channel of the endoscope. When the operator releases the suction valve, the valve returns to its normal position blocking air flow and stops the suctioning.

After each use, an endoscope must be cleaned, disinfected, and sterilized to prevent the spread of disease, germs, bacteria and illness. Many components of an endoscope may be reusable, such as the air/water valve and suction valve and thus, must also be cleaned, disinfected, and/or sterilized between uses. Unfortunately, there is usually a great expense associated with maintaining sterility of the equipment. In addition, since reusable air/water and suction valves may be assembled from a combination of several metal, plastic, and/or rubber components there are significant costs associated with the manufacturing of reusable air/water valves.

Accordingly, there is a need for single-use or disposable air/water and suction valves that can be easily manufactured and assembled using a variety of materials for various components of the valves. Additionally, disposable air/water and suction valves do not require expensive materials to fabricate the valves, thereby eliminating the high cost of manufacturing suction valves from expensive materials.

SUMMARY

The following embodiments and aspects thereof are described and illustrated in conjunction with systems, tools and methods, which are meant to be exemplary and illustrative, not limiting in scope. The present application discloses numerous embodiments.

The present specification discloses a disposable air and water valve for an endoscope, comprising: a shaft having a passage from a first opening to a vent, wherein the shaft has at least one groove, at least one ridge, and at least one protrusion formed at the vent; at least one seal set within the at least one groove; an outer cap; an inner ring having a diaphragm that extends from an outer circumference of the inner ring to an internal circumference of the outer cap, wherein at least one hinge extends vertically downwards from said diaphragm and wherein at least one rib is positioned along the internal circumference of the outer cap; a button cap having an internal ring that securely attaches to the shaft by fitting into a notch near the vent of the shaft; and a resilient member securely disposed between the button cap and the diaphragm, wherein the outer cap, inner ring, and internal ring of the button cap define a central bore to accommodate said shaft.

Optionally, the disposable air/water valve further comprises at least one bushing set within the at least one groove or a second groove, wherein said at least one bushing is configured to center said valve within a channel of an endoscope.

The shaft, seals, outer cap, inner ring, and button cap may comprise at least one of polyurethane, polyurea, polyether (amide), PEBA, thermoplastic elastomeric olefin, copolyester, styrenic thermoplastic elastomer, carbon fiber, glass fiber, ceramics, methacrylates, poly (N-isopropylacrylamide), PEO-PPO-PEO, rubber, plastic, polycarbonate, ABS, MABS, and silicone.

The resilient member may comprise at least one of a corrosion resistant metal, polyurethane, polyurea, polyether (amide), PEBA, thermoplastic elastomeric olefin, copolyester, and styrenic thermoplastic elastomer, carbon fiber, glass fiber, ceramics, methacrylates, poly (N-isopropylacrylamide), PEO-PPO-PEO, rubber, and plastic.

Optionally, the shaft comprises machined steel and said button cap comprises plastic and said shaft is mechanically bonded to said button cap.

Optionally, the at least one hinge comprises a tine and barb wherein the barb has a width of less than 200 microns.

Optionally, the at least one hinge is configured to connect to a corresponding mount on an endoscope and prevent vertical displacement of said at least one seal. Optionally, said at least one hinge is configured to generate an audible and tactile snap when said at least one hinge is connected to said corresponding mount, thereby indicating that the valve has been seated correctly.

Optionally, the at least one rib is configured to act as an edge stop to ensure said valve is centered on the mount and prevent a side loading from breaking said at least one seal.

Optionally, the outer cap and said inner ring with said at least one hinge and said at least one rib are molded as a single component.

The present specification also discloses a disposable suction valve for an endoscope, comprising: a shaft having a passage from a first opening to a vent, wherein the shaft has a plurality of grooves, a plurality of ridges and a protrusion formed at the vent; an outer cap; an inner ring having a diaphragm that extends from an outer circumference of the inner ring to an internal circumference of the outer cap, wherein a plurality of vertical hinges extend downward from said diaphragm and wherein a plurality of vertical ribs are formed along the internal circumference of the outer cap; a button cap having an internal ring configured to securely attach to the shaft; and a resilient member securely disposed between the button cap and the diaphragm, wherein the outer cap, inner ring, and internal ring of the button cap define a central bore to accommodate the shaft.

Optionally, the internal ring securely attaches to the shaft by fitting into a tapered notch near the vent of the shaft.

Optionally, each of the plurality of hinges comprises a tine and a barb. Optionally, the barb is defined by a width of less than 200 microns.

Optionally, said plurality of hinges is configured to connect to a corresponding mount on an endoscope. Optionally, each of said plurality of hinges is configured to generate an audible and tactile snap when each of said plurality of hinges connects to said corresponding mount.

Optionally, each of said plurality of vertical ribs is configured to act as an edge stop to ensure said valve is centered on the mount.

Optionally, the outer cap and said inner ring with said plurality of hinges and said plurality of ribs are molded as a single component.

The present specification also discloses a method of operating a disposable air/water valve for an endoscope comprising an air channel and a water channel each connected to a water bottle, said method comprising: placing a disposable air and water valve in a port of an endoscope wherein said disposable air and water valve comprises: a shaft having a passage from a first opening to a vent, wherein the shaft has a plurality of grooves, a plurality of ridges, and a protrusion formed at the vent; a plurality of seals set within at least a portion of the plurality of grooves; an outer cap; an inner ring having a diaphragm that extends from an outer circumference of the inner ring to an internal circumference of the outer cap, wherein a plurality of hinges extend vertically downwards from said diaphragm and wherein a plurality of ribs are formed along the internal circumference of the outer cap; a button cap having an internal ring configured to securely attach to the shaft; and a member securely disposed between the button cap and the diaphragm, wherein the outer cap, inner ring, and internal ring of the button cap define a central bore to accommodate the shaft; allowing air to enter at said first opening and escape from said vent when valve is un-actuated; covering said vent to force air through said air channel in a distal direction to

insufflate a body cavity; actuating said valve by depressing said button cap to compress said resilient member and move said first opening into said water channel, forcing air into said water bottle and resulting in water being forced through said water channel in a distal direction; and releasing said button cap to allow said resilient member to decompress, move said first opening out of alignment with said water channel, un-actuate said valve and stop said flow of water.

The present specification also discloses a method of operating a disposable suction valve for an endoscope connected to a suction pump, said method comprising: placing a disposable suction valve in a suction cylinder of an endoscope wherein said disposable suction valve comprises: a shaft having a passage from a first opening to a vent, wherein the shaft has a plurality of grooves, a plurality of ridges and a protrusion formed at the vent; an inner ring having a diaphragm that extends from an outer circumference of the inner ring, wherein at least one hinge extends downward from said diaphragm; a button cap with an internal ring configured to securely attach to the shaft; and a resilient member securely disposed between the button cap and the diaphragm; preventing the suction pump from preventing negative pressure in the suction channel by not actuating said suction valve; actuating said suction valve by depressing said button cap to compress said resilient member and move said first opening into alignment with said suction channel, allowing said suction pump to create negative pressure in said suction channel to suction air and/or fluid from a distal end of said endoscope; and releasing said button cap to allow said resilient member to decompress to thereby move said first opening out of alignment with said suction channel, un-actuate said valve and stop said suction.

The aforementioned and other embodiments of the present shall be described in greater depth in the drawings and detailed description provided below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features and advantages of the present invention will be appreciated, as they become better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a single use, disposable air/water valve in accordance with an embodiment of the present specification;

FIG. 1B is a cross-section view of the air/water valve of FIG. 1A;

FIG. 1C is another cross-section view of the air/water valve of FIG. 1A;

FIG. 1D is yet another cross-section view of the air/water valve of FIG. 1A;

FIG. 1E is a bottom perspective view of the air/water valve of FIG. 1A;

FIG. 1F is a bottom view of the air/water valve of FIG. 1A;

FIG. 1G illustrates a first hinge or hook configured to enable a first amount of insertion/removal force, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 1H illustrates a second hinge or hook configured to enable a second amount of insertion/removal force, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 1I illustrates a third hinge or hook configured to enable a third amount of insertion/removal force, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 1J illustrates a fourth hinge or hook configured to enable a fourth amount of insertion/removal force, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 2A is a table showing an air/water valve insertion force for a 140 micron hook;

FIG. 2B is a table showing an air/water valve insertion force for a 70 micron hook;

FIG. 2C is a table showing an air/water valve insertion force for a 35 micron hook;

FIG. 2D is a table showing an air/water valve removal force for a 140 micron hook;

FIG. 2E is a table showing an air/water valve removal force for a 70 micron hook;

FIG. 2F is a table showing an air/water valve removal force for a 35 micron hook;

FIG. 3A is an illustration showing various dimensions of a 70 micron hook that is used in an air/water valve of the present specification;

FIG. 3B is an illustration showing various dimensions of a 70 micron hook that is used in an air/water valve of the present specification;

FIG. 3C is an illustration showing various dimensions of a 70 micron hook that is used in an air/water valve of the present specification;

FIG. 3D is a table showing an air/water valve depression force for a 140 micron hook;

FIG. 3E is a table showing an air/water valve depression force for a 70 micron hook;

FIG. 3F is a table showing an air/water valve depression force for a 35 micron hook;

FIG. 4A illustrates an embodiment of an exemplary outer cap with a hook size of 70 micros and a lead-in angle of 15 degrees on each side;

FIG. 4B shows a bottom view (or attachment portion) of the outer cap of FIG. 4A that is used to attach the air/water valve to a corresponding mount of an endoscope;

FIG. 4C is a diagram showing the location of cross-section A-A of an outer cap;

FIG. 4D is a cross-sectional view of the outer cap of FIG. 4C;

FIG. 4E is a diagram showing the location of cross-section A-A on an outer cap;

FIG. 4F is a cross-sectional view of the outer cap of FIG. 4E; and

FIG. 4G which represents an exploded view of cross section B-B of FIG. 4F.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart illustrating a plurality of exemplary steps involved in operating an air/water valve of the present specification;

FIG. 6A is a perspective view of a disposable suction valve in accordance with an embodiment of the present specification;

FIG. 6B is a top view of the disposable suction valve of FIG. 6A;

FIG. 6C is a vertical cross-section view along an axis F-F of the disposable suction valve of FIG. 6A;

FIG. 6D is a horizontal cross-section view along an axis G-G of the disposable suction valve of FIG. 6C;

FIG. 6E is a bottom perspective view of the disposable suction valve of FIG. 6A;

FIG. 6F is a magnified view of the bottom of the disposable suction valve of FIG. 6E; and,

FIG. 7 is a flow chart illustrating a plurality of exemplary steps involved in operating a suction valve of the present specification;

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present specification is directed towards multiple embodiments. The following disclosure is provided in order

to enable a person having ordinary skill in the art to practice the invention. Language used in this specification should not be interpreted as a general disavowal of any one specific embodiment or used to limit the claims beyond the meaning of the terms used therein. The general principles defined herein may be applied to other embodiments and applications without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Also, the terminology and phraseology used is for the purpose of describing exemplary embodiments and should not be considered limiting. Thus, the present invention is to be accorded the widest scope encompassing numerous alternatives, modifications and equivalents consistent with the principles and features disclosed. For purpose of clarity, details relating to technical material that is known in the technical fields related to the invention have not been described in detail so as not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention. In the description and claims of the application, each of the words “comprise” “include” and “have”, and forms thereof, are not necessarily limited to members in a list with which the words may be associated.

It should be noted herein that any feature or component described in association with a specific embodiment may be used and implemented with any other embodiment unless clearly indicated otherwise.

As used herein, the indefinite articles “a” and “an” mean “at least one” or “one or more” unless the context clearly dictates otherwise.

It is noted that the term “endoscope” as mentioned to herein may refer particularly to colonoscopes and gastroscopes, according to some embodiments, but is not limited only to colonoscopes and gastroscopes. The term “endoscope” may refer to any instrument used to examine the interior of a hollow organ or cavity of the body.

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a disposable air/water valve **100** in accordance with an embodiment of the present specification while FIGS. 1B, 1C and 1D are respectively first, second and third cross-section views of the air/water valve **100**. Referring now to FIGS. 1A through 1D, the air/water valve **100** comprises a stem or shaft **105** having a plurality of grooves **109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115** and ridges **116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123** that are molded or machined, in various embodiments, as part of the shaft **105**. A plurality of seals **125, 127, and 129** may be set into the respective grooves **109, 112, 114** in accordance with some embodiments. A plurality of bushings **126, 128** may be set into respective grooves **110, 113** in accordance with some embodiments. The bushings **126, 128** assist in centering the air/water valve **100** in a channel within an endoscope. In various embodiments, the bushings **126, 128** are rigid or semi-rigid. In some embodiments, the air/water valve includes two bushings **126, 128** positioned in grooves **110, 113** respectively. In other embodiments, the air/water valve **100** includes only bushing **126** positioned in groove **110**. In other embodiments, the device does not have bushings and, instead, rely on ribs to center the valve appropriately. In addition, air/water valve **100** may also comprise inner ring **135**, outer cap **140**, resilient member **145** (FIG. 1C, 1D) such as, but not limited to, spring, rubber, elastic, and a button cap **150**.

In accordance with aspects of the present specification, the ridge **116** prevents unintentional removal of the seal **125** by providing an additional interference between the seal **125** and the shaft **105**. In various embodiments, the shaft **105** has a preferred travel direction (from the ridge **116** toward the end **165**) which enables an easier placement of the seal **125** than removal of the seal due to a direction of taper of the ridge **116**.

The components of air/water valve **100** may comprise at least one disposable material, including, but not limited to polyurethane, polyurea, polyether(amide), PEBA, thermoplastic elastomeric olefin, copolyester, styrenic thermoplastic elastomer, carbon fiber, glass fiber, ceramics, methacrylates, poly (N-isopropylacrylamide), PEO-PPO-PEO (plurionics), rubber, plastic (e.g., polycarbonates), ABS, MABS, silicone, or combinations thereof. The resilient member **145** may be formed from a suitable material, such as corrosion resistant metal, polyurethane, polyurea, polyether(amide), PEBA, thermoplastic elastomeric olefin, copolyester, and styrenic thermoplastic elastomer, carbon fiber, glass fiber, ceramics, methacrylates, poly (N-isopropylacrylamide), PEO-PPO-PEO (plurionics), rubber, plastic, or combinations thereof.

It should be understood that the plurality of seals **125**, **127**, and **129** can be any member suitable for sealing a portion of the shaft **105**. The positioning of the seals corresponds to the water and air channels. The seals serve to prevent air from entering the water channel and to prevent air from exiting anywhere other than outside of the vent hold on the top of the shaft **105**. In some embodiments, the plurality of seals can be permanently attached to the shaft **105**, such as for example, by over-molding. In other embodiments, the plurality of seals can be removably attached to the shaft **105**, such as for example, by sliding the seal onto shaft **105**. Like other components of the air/water valve **100**, the plurality of seals can comprise polyurethane, polyurea, polyether(amide), PEBA, thermoplastic elastomeric olefin, copolyester, and styrenic thermoplastic elastomer, carbon fiber, glass fiber, ceramics, methacrylates, poly (N-isopropylacrylamide), PEO-PPO-PEO (plurionics), rubber, plastic (e.g., polycarbonates), ABS, MABS, silicone or combinations thereof.

In embodiments, the air/water valve **100**, when attached to or mounted onto an endoscope enables an air-flow rate of at least 800 cc/min from the tip section of the endoscope, wherein the tip section is capable of an overall output of about 1500 cc/min at a pressure of 0.05 MPa (mega pascal). In some embodiments, the seal **127** is fabricated from a TPE (Thermoplastic Elastomer) material having a wall thickness of 0.35 mm and a 50 shore A hardness which enables an air-flow rate of at least 800 cc/min. In a preferred embodiment, the seal **127** is fabricated from a TPE material having a wall thickness of 0.22 mm and a 50 shore A hardness which enables an air-flow rate in a range of 1250 to 1300 cc/min. It should be appreciated that the wall thickness for the seal **127** may vary, in other embodiments, depending upon at least the type of material, hardness, geometry, molding conditions and number of support ribs. In some embodiments, the seal **127** includes, along its sides, a plurality of ribs. One embodiment of the seal **127** comprises four ribs 90 degrees apart from one another—two fully spanning the cross-section of the seal and the other two acting as filling channels. In one embodiment, the air-flow rate is a minimum of 700 cc per minute.

The shaft **105** provides an opening **155** and a passage or bore **160** that runs upwards through the shaft **105**, substantially along a longitudinal axis **170**, from the opening **155** to an end or vent **165**. The opening **155** lies along an axis **172** that is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis **170**. When the end or vent **165** is not covered by an operator, air may travel via the opening **155** and up the passage or bore **160** to escape from the vent **165**.

The inner ring **135** has a diaphragm or collar **136** extending from an outer circumference of the inner ring **135** to the internal circumference of the outer cap **140**. The resilient

member **145** is installed to lie between the inner ring **135** and the button cap **150** such that one end of the resilient member **145** is secured to the diaphragm or collar **136** and the other end to the button cap **150**. In some embodiments, the inner ring **135** is a monolithic internally molded part of the outer cap **140** while in other embodiments these may be two separate components. In various embodiments, the outer cap **140** (along with the inner ring **135** when molded as a monolithic part of the outer cap **140**) is molded using material of sufficient rigidity. In an embodiment, the outer cap **140** is molded from ABS having a Rockwell R hardness of 112 or hardness in the range of 70 to 90 shore D. The inner ring **135**, outer cap **140** and the button cap **150** respectively define internal bores for receiving the end or vent **165** of the shaft **105**. End **165** of the shaft **105** is placed through inner ring **135** and resilient member **145** and secured to the button cap **150** (as shown in FIGS. 1C, 1D). When assembled, the diaphragm or collar **136** of the inner ring **135** rests upon the ridge **123**.

In accordance with an aspect of the present specification and as shown in FIG. 1D, an internal ring **180** of the button cap **150** is secured to the shaft **105**, at the end **165**, within a tapered notch, groove or recessed portion **175** (on the outer diameter of the shaft **105**) defined between a detent or protrusion **178** (towards the end **165**) and a ridge **179**. In an embodiment, the notch portion **175** is tapered at an angle 'A' with reference to a vertical line parallel to the longitudinal axis **170**.

Conventional valves typically use adhesive or welded joints to join or secure the button cap to the shaft. However, the securing mechanism of the present specification allows the use of dissimilar materials for the components such as the button cap **150** and the shaft **105**. For example, the shaft **105** may be of metal while the button cap **150** may be of plastic or the shaft **105** and the button cap **150** may both be of plastic yet of different melt temperatures. During a sterilization process, such as autoclaving, the plastic button cap **150** will melt and then become secured to shaft **105** as it dries post sterilization. Using dissimilar material for the button cap **150** and shaft **105** eliminates the need of matching material properties required in a gluing or welding process. Typically, materials must be selected so that they have similar melt temperatures (in the case of welding) or have surface properties conducive to adhesives. Eliminating such constraints allows the individual component materials of the button cap **150** and shaft **105** to be optimized for their specific purposes. For example, in some embodiments, the button cap is molded out of a lubricious plastic (ABS, Acetal, PTFE) that is cheap to manufacture. In some embodiments, the shaft **105** is machined out of steel and mechanically bonded to a plastic button. Use of a machined steel shaft allows for dimensional and geometric tolerances (diameter, straightness) that are difficult or impossible to meet with conventional molding. The shaft **105** and the button cap **150**, though manufactured of different materials or materials of different properties may be easily secured using the securing mechanism of the present specification. This further allows for optimization of materials for the shaft **105** and the button cap **150** and therefore the fabrication, manufacturing and assembly processes.

In accordance with another aspect of the present specification and as shown in FIGS. 1C, 1E and 1F, a plurality of hinges or hooks **182** extend vertically downwards (substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis **170**) from the diaphragm or collar **136**. The plurality of hinges **182** enables attachment of the air/water valve **100** to a corresponding mount of an endoscope. In various embodiments, the cor-

responding mount of an endoscope comprises a flange which is surrounded by ribs **185** of the outer cap **140**, as described further below, and onto which the hinges **182** of the outer cap **140** snap and connect. Thus, ribs **185** and hinges **182** contained within outer cap **140** are used to connect the air/water valve to the flange of an endoscope. In various embodiments, the flange is an integral part of the endoscope and not single use or disposable. Use of the hinges **182** for attachment prevents vertical displacement of the seals and provides an audible and tactile positive locking 'snap' indicating to a user that the valve **100** is properly seated. Conventionally, over-molded TPE/TPU/Silicone in a two-part design is used for attaching the valve to the endoscope mount. However, the attachment mechanism enabled by the plurality of hinges **182** of the present specification is easier to manufacture while also providing a more secure connection to the endoscope during use. Specifically, inclusion of the hinges **182** reduces the overall part count. A single component is molded for the device of the present specification, whereas, in the prior art, a two-step molding process must be used or manual assembly of a rubber boot with a rigid plastic collar is required. A single mold results in shorter molding times and lower tooling costs. Elimination of a manual assembly step reduces overall labor input into the device.

In accordance with aspects of the present specification, it is desirable to configure or design the hinges or hooks **182** so that it achieves both a tactile, locking feel while the valve **100** is attached to the endoscope mount (using the hinges **182**) but is not so engaged that removing the valve **100** (such as for autoclaving, for example) poses a challenge. In other words, it is desired that the amount of insertion force required to engage the hinges or hooks **182** to the endoscope mount should be optimal that enables sufficient retention or attachment of the valve **100** to the endoscope mount without the retention being too strong to enable detachment of the valve **100** from the endoscope mount a challenge.

FIGS. **1G** through **1J**, respectively illustrate first, second, third and fourth hinges or hooks **182g**, **182h**, **182i**, **182j** configured in accordance with various embodiments. In various embodiments, each hinge or hook **182g**, **182h**, **182i**, **182j** respectively comprises a barb **191**, **192**, **193**, **194** which is curved or angled (lead-in angle) on at least a portion and a tine **195**, **196**, **197**, **198**, which is a straight portion. Together, the barb and tine form an opening that is used to attach the valve **100** to an endoscope mount **101**. In an embodiment, the barb faces an inner diameter of the valve and the tine faces the outer diameter of the valve. In embodiments, the amount of insertion force required to engage a valve with an endoscope mount, degree of retention of the mounted valve, amount of depression force required to actuate the mounted valve and the amount of removal force required to disengage the valve from the endoscope mount are determined by at least a width 'w' and a lead-in angle Θ of the barb.

In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. **1G**, the barb **191** has a width $w_g=0.5$ mm and a lead-in angle $\Theta_g=45$ degrees enabling the hinge or hook **182g** to require a first amount of insertion/removal force.

In another embodiment, as shown in FIG. **1H**, the barb **192** has a width $w_h=0.25$ mm and a compound lead-in angle $\Theta_h=45/15$ degrees (different lead-in angles for each side) enabling the hinge or hook **182h** to require a second amount of insertion/removal force.

In another embodiment, as shown in FIG. **1I**, the barb **193** has a width $w_i=0.5$ mm and a compound lead-in angle

$\Theta_i=45/15$ degrees (different lead-in angles for each side) enabling the hinge or hook **182i** to require a third amount of insertion/removal force.

In yet another embodiment, as shown in FIG. **1J**, the barb **194** has a width $w_j=0.5$ mm and a lead-in angle $\Theta_j=15$ degrees enabling the hinge or hook **182j** to require a fourth amount of insertion/removal force.

The amount of insertion/removal force corresponding to the hinges or hooks **182g** through **182j** varies as follows: first insertion/removal force > second insertion/removal force > third insertion/removal force > fourth insertion/removal force. Accordingly, the corresponding retention is highest for hinge or hook **182g** progressively reducing for hinges or hooks **182h**, **182i** and lowest for hinge or hook **182j**. Therefore, it can be generalized that the greater the width and the greater the compound lead-in angle, the greater the amount of force needed for insertion/removal.

As an example, air/water valve hinges or hooks having barb dimensions of 140 microns, 70 microns and 35 microns were tested to determine insertion force, removal force, and depression force. Note that a unit having 0 microns (or no barb) would have a very low retention force that would be insufficient for the purposes of the present invention. As shown in the table **205** in FIG. **2A**, for the 140 micron hooks, the insertion force varied from 8.1 to 12.2 N. As shown in table **210** in FIG. **2B**, for the 70 micron hooks, the insertion force varied from 7.4 to 13 N. As shown in table **215** in FIG. **2B**, for the 35 micron hooks, the insertion force varied from 6.4 to 12 N. While there is some overlap, the general trend shows that the thinner the barb, the less the insertion force required.

As shown in the table **220** in FIG. **2D**, for the 140 micron hooks, the removal force varied from 5.8 to 14.2 N. As shown in the table **225** in FIG. **2E**, for the 70 micron hooks, the removal force varied from 4.0 to 9.2 N. As shown in the table **230** in FIG. **2F**, for the 35 micron hooks, the removal force varied from 4.5 to 6.6 N. Again, while there is some overlap, the general trend shows that the thinner the barb, the less the removal force required.

FIGS. **3A**, **3B** and **3C** are partial diagrams of a molded and machined air/water outer cap **300**. In an embodiment, as shown in FIG. **3A**, an exemplary molded hook portion **320** has a width **321** of approximately 2.10 mm. Further, as shown in FIG. **3B**, the thickness **322** of the hook **320** at a base portion **323** is approximately 0.7 mm. In an embodiment, it should be noted that the thickness **322** of the base portion **323** of the hook **320** ranges from 0.5 mm to 1.0 mm, as too thick of a hook will lead to stiffness and too thin of a hook will lead to a part that is not moldable.

As shown in FIG. **3C**, the overall length or height **324** of the hook **320** is approximately 3.8 mm. Further, hook **320** travels a distance **325** of 0.504 mm when depressed or engaged. As shown in the table **314** in FIG. **3D**, for the 140 micron hooks, the depression force varied from 9.15 to 20.95 N. As shown in the table **316** in FIG. **3E**, for the 70 micron hooks, the depression force varied from 9.40 to 18.94 N. As shown in the table **318** in FIG. **3F**, for the 35 micron hooks, the depression force varied from 10.65 to 15.26 N. Again, while there is some overlap, the general trend shows that the thinner the barb, the less the depression force required.

In one embodiment, the hook, having a barb and tine, comprises a barb having a width of less than 200 micron.

In accordance with still another aspect of the present specification and as shown in FIGS. **1E** and **1F**, a plurality of positioning ribs **185** are formed along the inner circumference of the outer cap **140**. The ribs **185** extend vertically

downwards (substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis **170**) along the inner circumference of the outer cap **140**. The ribs **185** enable the valve **100** to be centered on a valve well on the endoscope, aligning the shaft **105** with a center of the valve well and enabling precise vertical positioning of the plurality of seals within the valve well. The ribs **185** act as edge stops to ensure the valve **100** is centered on the mount and also prevent side loading from the user from breaking the seals on the valves.

In various embodiments, the shaft **105** of the disposable air/water valve **100** along with the plurality of ridges and grooves are of the same material as the shaft **105**. Similarly, the plurality of hinges or hooks **182** and ribs **185** may be molded as components of the inner ring **135** and the outer cap **140** (the inner ring **135** and outer cap **140** may also be molded as a single component) in accordance with various embodiments. It should be appreciated that the shaft **105**, the plurality of seals **125**, **127**, and **129**, inner ring **135**, outer cap **140** and button cap **150** may all be manufactured from dissimilar materials and still be easily assembled or secured together in accordance with various aspects of the present specification.

As described with respect to FIGS. 1C, 1E and 1F, a plurality of hinges or hooks **182** extend vertically downwards (substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis **170**) from the diaphragm or collar **136**. The plurality of hinges or hooks **182** enables attachment of the air/water valve **100** to a corresponding mount of an endoscope. FIGS. 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E, 4F, and 4G illustrate an exemplary outer cap and associated components having a barb hook size of 70 microns with a lead-in angle of 15 degrees on each side. Outer cap **500** is shown in FIG. 4A and in an embodiment, has a height 'h' of approximately 12.20 mm. FIG. 4B shows the underside **405** or attachment portion of outer cap **400** that is used to attach the air/water valve to a corresponding mount of an endoscope. As shown in FIG. 4B, the attachment portion **405** may have a diameter of approximately 18.33 mm. FIG. 4C is a diagram showing the cross-section A-A **410** of outer cap **400** which is described in greater detail in FIG. 4D. As shown in FIG. 4D, cross section A-A **410** of the outer cap **400** shows an approximate distance **415a** of 13.30 mm between hooks **420**, at a proximal end **420a**, at the barbs **430** where the hook engages with a flange on the corresponding mount of an endoscope. At a distal end **420b**, the approximate distance **415b** between hooks **420** is 14.50 mm. Further, the approximate length **425** of each hook **420** is 4.10 mm.

FIG. 4E shows outer cap **400** with cross-section A-A **450** in a different view, as represented by FIG. 4F. As shown in FIG. 4F, the approximate distance **455** between barbs **430** of the hook **420** (where the hook engages with a flange on the corresponding mount of an endoscope) is 14.185±0.06 mm. In one embodiment, the barbs **430** are machined at an angle **435** of approximately 15±3 degrees with respect to a central longitudinal axis **460**. Further, a straight edge of barbs **430**, located just above the angular slanted portion, is machined at a distance of approximately 7.530 mm from the central longitudinal axis **460**. This detail is shown in FIG. 4G which represents an exploded view of cross section B-B of FIG. 4F. Further, a straight portion or tine **440** of hook **420** extends approximately 0.320±0.1 farther than barbs **430**.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart illustrating a plurality of exemplary steps involved in operating an air/water valve of the present specification. Referring now to FIGS. 1A through 1D and FIG. 5, during operation the air/water valve **100** of the present specification may be positioned in an air/water cylinder of an endoscope. The endoscope provides an air

channel for air and a water channel for water. The air and water channels are connected to a water bottle. The water channel extends into the fluid contained in the water bottle. When air/water valve **100** is placed in the air/water cylinder of the endoscope, the air/water valve **100** passes through both the air and water channels.

At step **505**, the air/water valve **100** is un-actuated, that is the button cap **150** is not depressed and the resilient member **145** is not compressed, and the vent **165** is open. As a result, at step **510** the air/water valve **100** allows air flow (provided by an air pump, for example) to enter the valve opening **155** and escape from the vent **165**. Note that disposable air/water valve **100** provides a plurality of seals (**125**, **127**, and **129**) that prevent air or water from leaking from the air or water channels. Also, the opening **155** of the air-water valve **100** is not aligned with the water channel and therefore there is no movement of water away from the water bottle, as the water channel is blocked.

At step **515**, the air/water valve **100** is unactuated, that is the button cap **150** is not depressed and the resilient member **145** is not compressed, but the vent **165** is closed or covered by an operator (using his finger, for example). As before, from the previous step **510**, the water channel is still blocked by the air/water valve **100**. Since the air vent **165** is now blocked by the operator, air from the air pump flows, at step **520**, past the air/water valve **100** towards a distal end of an endoscope. This allows the operator to insufflate a body cavity by blocking the air vent **165** of air/water valve **100** without actuating the valve.

At step **525**, the air/water valve **100** is actuated, that is the button cap **150** is depressed and the resilient member **145** is compressed, and the vent **165** continues to remain obstructed, closed or covered by the operator. Depressing the button cap **150** causes a downward force to be applied to the shaft **105** via ridge **179** and therefore the shaft **105** moves or is displaced downwards. Also, depressing the button cap **150** causes the resilient member **145** to compress against the supporting collar or diaphragm **136**.

The collar **136** rests against the endoscope mount and is therefore prevented from moving downwards (due to the depression of the button cap **150**). The downward movement or displacement of the shaft **105** causes the valve **100** to block the air channel and moves the opening **155** into the water channel, thereby creating a passageway for water to pass through the air/water valve **100**, at step **530**. Because the vent **165** is also blocked by the operator pressing down on the valve **100** (for depressing the button cap **150**), air flows instead into the water bottle via an air branched-channel connected to the water bottle. As the air pressure in water bottle increases, fluid is forced from the water bottle into the water channel, at step **535**. Thus, by actuating the air/water valve **100**, the operator causes water to flow towards the distal end of the endoscope for rinsing or irrigation.

When the operator stops depressing the button cap **150**, the compressed resilient member **145** begins to recoil or get uncompressed. The recoiling resilient member **145** applies an upward force to the button cap **150** that in turn transfers the upward force to the shaft **105** via the detent or protrusion **178**. This causes both the shaft **105** and the button cap **150** to be displaced upwards and return to the un-actuated position of the valve **100** of step **505**.

FIG. 6A is a perspective view of a disposable suction valve **600** in accordance with an embodiment of the present specification, FIG. 6B is a top view of the disposable suction valve **600**, FIG. 6C is a vertical cross-section view along an axis F-F of the disposable suction valve **600** of FIG. 6A

while FIG. 6D is a horizontal cross-section view along an axis G-G of the disposable suction valve 600 of FIG. 6C. Referring now to FIGS. 6A through 6D, the disposable suction valve 600 comprises a stem or shaft 605 of outer diameter 'D' and having a first groove or recess 610 (of a first diameter d_1) and a second groove or recess 612 (of a second diameter d_2) formed on the outer circumference of the shaft 605 and towards an end 615 of the shaft 605; the first and second grooves 610, 612 result in the formation of a first ridge 611 and a second ridge 613; an inner ring 620 having a bore of a first internal diameter b_1 along a first length l_1 (parallel to the longitudinal axis F-F) of the bore and a second internal diameter b_2 along a second length l_2 (parallel to the longitudinal axis F-F) of the bore, wherein b_1 is approximately equal to d_2 and b_2 is approximately equal to 'D'; an outer cap 630; a resilient member 635 such as, but not limited to, spring, rubber, elastic; and a button cap 640 having a central bore (along the longitudinal axis F-F).

The components of the disposable suction valve 600 may comprise disposable material, including, but not limited to polyurethane, polyurea, polyether(amide), PEBA, thermoplastic elastomeric olefin, copolyester, styrenic thermoplastic elastomer, carbon fiber, glass fiber, ceramics, methacrylates, poly (N-isopropylacrylamide), PEO-PPO-PEO (plurionics), rubber, plastic (e.g., polycarbonates), ABS, MABS, silicone, or combinations thereof. The resilient member 635 may be formed from a suitable material, such as corrosion resistant metal, polyurethane, polyurea, polyether(amide), PEBA, thermoplastic elastomeric olefin, copolyester, and styrenic thermoplastic elastomer, carbon fiber, glass fiber, ceramics, methacrylates, poly (N-isopropylacrylamide), PEO-PPO-PEO (plurionics), rubber, plastic, or combinations thereof.

The shaft 605 provides an opening 655 and a passage or bore 660 that runs through the shaft 605, substantially along the longitudinal axis F-F, from the opening 655 and vertically downwards to an end, opening or vent 665. The opening 655 lies along an axis G-G that is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis 670. Fluid may pass horizontally through one side of the opening 655 and vertically downwards through the vent 665. Opening 655 and vent 665 allow air or fluid to pass through a suction channel of the endoscope when the suction valve 600 is actuated.

The inner ring 620 has a diaphragm or collar 625 (FIG. 6D) extending from an outer circumference of the inner ring 620 to the internal circumference of the outer cap 630. The resilient member 635 resides between the inner ring 620 and the button cap 640 such that one end of the resilient member 635 is secured to the diaphragm or collar 625 and the other end to the button cap 640. In some embodiments, the inner ring 620 is a monolithic internally molded part of the outer cap 630 while in other embodiments these may be two separate components. The inner ring 620, outer cap 630 and the button cap 640 respectively define internal bores for receiving the end 615 of the shaft 605. End 615 of the shaft 605 is placed through inner ring 620 and resilient member 635 and secured to the button cap 640. When assembled, the first length l_1 of the bore of the inner ring 620 fits over the second groove 612 (since, b_1 is approximately equal to d_2) to rest upon the second ridge 613.

In accordance with an aspect of the present specification and as shown in FIG. 6C, an internal ring 680 of the button cap 640 is secured to the shaft 605, at the end 615, within the first groove or recess 610 that has a taper defined between a detent or protrusion 678 (towards the end 615) and the first ridge 611. In an embodiment, the first groove or recess 610

is tapered at an angle 'N' with reference to a vertical line parallel to the longitudinal axis F-F. Conventional designs typically join or secure the button cap to the shaft using adhesive or welded joints. For optimal performance, the suction valve shaft requires a high degree of dimensional precision, generally not available to molded components. The securing mechanism of the present specification allows for a higher degree of dimensional precision through the use of dissimilar materials for the components such as the button cap 640 and the shaft 605. For example, the shaft 605 may be of metal while the button cap 640 may be of plastic or the shaft 605 and the button cap 640 may both be of plastic yet of different melt temperatures. During a sterilization process, such as autoclaving, the plastic button cap 640 will melt and then become secured to shaft 605 as it dries post sterilization. Using dissimilar material for the button cap 640 and shaft 605 eliminates the need of matching material properties required in a gluing or welding process. Typically, materials must be selected so that they have similar melt temperatures (in the case of welding) or have surface properties conducive to adhesives. Eliminating such constraints allows the individual component materials of the button cap 640 and shaft 605 to be optimized for their specific purposes. For example, in some embodiments, the button cap is molded out of a lubricious plastic (ABS, Acetal, PTFE) that is cheap to manufacture. In some embodiments, the shaft 605 is machined out of steel and mechanically bonded to a plastic button. Use of a machined steel shaft allows for dimensional and geometric tolerances (diameter, straightness) that are difficult or impossible to meet with conventional molding. The shaft 205 and the button cap 640 though manufactured of different materials or materials of different properties may be easily secured using the securing mechanism of the present specification. This further allows optimization of materials for the shaft 605 and the button cap 640 and therefore their manufacturing and assembling processes.

In accordance with another aspect of the present specification and as shown in FIGS. 6D, 6E and 6F, a plurality of hinges or hooks 682 extend vertically downwards (substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis F-F) from the diaphragm or collar 625. The plurality of hinges or hooks 682 enables attachment of the suction valve 600 to a corresponding mount of the endoscope. In various embodiments, the corresponding mount of an endoscope comprises a flange which ribs 685 of the outer cap 630 surround, as described further below, and on to which the hinges 682 of the outer cap 630 snap and connect. In various embodiments, the flange is an integral part of the endoscope and not single use or disposable. The hinges or hooks 682 allow the collar component to be a single molded part, rather than an over-molded component or an assembly. Use of the hinges or hooks 682, for attachment, provides an audible and tactile positive locking 'snap' indicating to the user that the valve 600 is properly seated. Typically, a two-part over-molded TPE/TPU/Silicone design is used for attaching the valve to the endoscope mount. However, the attachment mechanism enabled by the plurality of hinges 682 of the present specification is easier to manufacture while also providing a more secure connection to the endoscope during use. Specifically, inclusion of the hinges 682 reduces the overall part count. A single component is molded for the device of the present specification, whereas, in the prior art, a two-step molding process must be used or manual assembly of a rubber boot with a rigid plastic collar is required. A single mold results

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in shorter molding times and lower tooling costs. Elimination of a manual assembly step reduces overall labor input into the device.

In accordance with still another aspect of the present specification and as shown in FIGS. 6D, 6E and 6F, a plurality of positioning ribs 685 are formed along the inner circumference of the outer cap 630. The ribs 685 extend vertically downwards (substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis F-F) along the inner circumference of the outer cap 630. The ribs 685 enable the valve 600 to be centered on a valve well on the endoscope, aligning the shaft 605 with a center of the valve well. The ribs 685 act as edge stops to ensure the valve 600 is centered on the mount.

In various embodiments, the plurality of hinges or hooks 682 and ribs 685 may be molded as components of the inner ring 620 and the outer cap 630 (the inner ring 620 and outer cap 630 may also be molded as a single component) in accordance with some embodiments. It should be appreciated that the shaft 605, inner ring 620, outer cap 630 and button cap 640 may all be manufactured from dissimilar materials and still be easily assembled or secured together in accordance with various aspects of the present specification.

FIG. 7 is a flow chart illustrating a plurality of exemplary steps involved in operating a suction valve of the present specification. Referring now to FIGS. 6A through 6F and FIG. 7, during operation the disposable suction valve 600 of the present specification may be placed into a suction cylinder of the endoscope. A suction channel of the endoscope is linked to the opening 655 (of the suction valve 600) and leads to a distal end of an endoscope or leads toward the patient. The endoscope may be connected to a suction pump to create negative pressure in the suction channel when the suction valve 600 is actuated.

At step 705, the suction valve 600 is unactuated, meaning that the button cap 640 is not depressed and the resilient member 635 is not compressed. As a result, at step 710, the opening 655 remains out of position with the suction channel of the endoscope, thereby preventing the suction pump from creating negative pressure in the suction channel (that is, no suction is applied to the distal end of the endoscope).

At step 715, the suction valve 600 is actuated—that is, the button cap 640 is depressed and the resilient member 635 is compressed. Depressing the button cap 640 causes a downward force to be applied to the shaft 605 via the first ridge 611 and therefore the shaft 605 moves or is displaced downwards. Also, depressing the button cap 640 causes compression of the resilient member 635 against the supporting collar or diaphragm 625. The ring 620 rests against the second ridge 613 as a result of which the collar 625 is prevented from moving downwards (due to the depression of the button cap 640). The downward movement or displacement of the shaft 605 causes the opening 655 to move into position with the suction channel from the distal end of the endoscope or from the patient. At step 720, by aligning the opening 655 with the suction channel of the endoscope, a negative pressure created by the suction pump cause flow from the distal end of the endoscope towards the opening 655 (that is, suction is applied to the distal end of the endoscope). As a result, air and/or fluid may be suctioned from the distal end of the endoscope when the disposable suction valve 600 is in an actuated position.

When the suction valve 600 is released—that is, button cap 640 is not depressed the resilient member 635 recoils and applies an upward force to the button cap 640 that in turn transfers the upward force to the shaft 605 via the detent or protrusion 678. This causes both the shaft 605 and the button

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cap 640 to be displaced upwards and return to the unactuated position of the valve 600 of step 705.

The above examples are merely illustrative of the many applications of the system of present invention. Although only a few embodiments of the present invention have been described herein, it should be understood that the present invention might be embodied in many other specific forms without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Therefore, the present examples and embodiments are to be considered as illustrative and not restrictive, and the invention may be modified within the scope of the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A method of operating a suction valve for an endoscope connected to a source of suction, wherein the suction valve is in a cylinder of the endoscope, wherein the suction valve comprises:
 - a shaft having a passage from a first opening to a vent, an outer cap,
 - an inner ring radially inside of the outer cap, a diaphragm extending radially outward from the inner ring,
 - a hinge extending downward from the diaphragm, positioned radially outward, relative to the longitudinal axis, from the inner ring, and configured to couple the suction valve to a port of the endoscope, wherein a portion of the outer cap is radially outward, relative to the longitudinal axis, from the hinge,
 - a button cap fixed to the shaft, and
 - a resilient member disposed between the button cap and the diaphragm;
 the method comprising:
 - preventing the source of suction from providing negative pressure in a suction channel of the endoscope when the suction valve is not actuated; and
 - actuating the suction valve by depressing the button cap to compress the resilient member from a decompressed position to a compressed position and move the first opening into alignment with the suction channel, allowing the source of suction to provide negative pressure in the suction channel, wherein the button cap extends within the outer cap when the resilient member is in the compressed position and in the decompressed position.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising releasing the button cap to allow the resilient member to return to the decompressed position and thereby move the first opening out of alignment with the suction channel.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the button cap includes an internal ring, and the internal ring couples to the shaft within a groove of the shaft, wherein the groove is tapered and extends between a protrusion and a ridge of the shaft.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the hinge includes a plurality of vertical hinges extending downward from the diaphragm, the suction valve further includes a plurality of vertical ribs extending along an inner surface of the portion of the outer cap, and wherein each of the plurality of vertical ribs are coupled to the diaphragm at a proximal end.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein each of the plurality of vertical hinges comprises a tine and a barb.
6. The method of claim 4, wherein said plurality of vertical hinges are configured to connect to a corresponding mount on an endoscope; and wherein each of the plurality of hinges is configured to generate an audible snap or a tactile snap when each of the plurality of hinges connects to the corresponding mount.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein each of the plurality of vertical ribs is configured to act as a stop to ensure the valve is centered on the corresponding mount.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the shaft has at least one ridge and a tapered notch, groove or recessed portion 5 where the button cap is fixed to the shaft.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the resilient member includes a spring.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the outer cap, the diaphragm, and the inner ring are molded as a single 10 component.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the vent comprises a second opening and the first opening faces a direction angled relative to the direction the second opening faces.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein a first end of the 15 resilient member is secured to the diaphragm, and a second end of the resilient member is secured to the button cap.

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